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Documentary in a Multiplatform Context

Inge Ejbye Sørensen

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Ph.D. thesis

Inge Ejbye Sørensen

Documentary in a Multiplatform Context



Academic advisor: Professor Ib Bondebjerg

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Author: Inge Ejbye Sørensen
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Article 1: Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing. The Impact of Online Funding and Distribution on the Documentary Film Industry in the UK. In *Media, Culture & Society* 34(6) (2012) 726– 743.

Article 2: Channels as Content Curators. Multiplatform Strategies for Documentary Film and Factual Content in British Public Service Broadcasting. (In review).

Article 3: Newsjacking the Media: Video Ambushing and AV Astroturfing. In Howley, K. (Ed.) (forthcoming 2013) *Media Interventions*. London: Peter Lang.

Article 4: Documentary at Play. Paper presented at the conference *New Documentary Formats*, the Department of Film & Media, Copenhagen University. March 30th 2012. (Article co-written with Anne Mette Thorhauge.)

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Introduction - Documentary in a multiplatform world

This thesis explores documentary films in a multiplatform context, and asks how convergence, multiplatform broadcasting, production and viewing as well as Web 2.0 technologies and tools has impacted on documentary film and the documentary industry in the UK, in the period 2006 to 2011.

It is widely accepted by academics, film-makers and critics that cheaper and more accessible production tools and technology, increased bandwidth and the ability to stream and upload unlimited audiovisual content online, are affecting how media texts are produced, distributed and received, and that, in this process, the positions of the broadcasters, public funders, investors and producers in the documentary industry are being renegotiated and redefined (Benkler, 2006; Bennett, 2008; Bruhn Jensen, 2008; Caldwell, 2006; Jenkins, 2006, 2007). Although the physical production processes of developing, shooting and editing have not changed beyond recognition, producers and investors have new funding and distribution avenues for their content and can therefore no longer be certain about which production model offers the most effective route to fund their films and recoup investments. Similarly, public funders and broadcasters have new opportunities for collaborations and diversification but can no longer take for granted their position as the only gatekeepers, deciding which content will be commissioned, produced and aired. The users, or 'the people formerly known as the audience' as the interactive producer Anthony Lilley describes them (2006), are no longer simply recipients of audiovisual content, transmitted on specific platforms at specific times, but now have unprecedented opportunities to create, upload and share their own factual and documentary content online, as well as to design their own viewing schedule of streamed content and downloads from film distribution sites, specialised portals or the VOD services of the online and offline broadcasters.

In this new media paradigm, the production, viewing, funding and distribution of documentary films are changing too. In the UK, with limited public arts funding for documentary film available from the BFI (the former UK Film Council) and its regional offices, the vast majority of all documentaries are funded and commissioned by the four terrestrial TV broadcasters, BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Five (PACT, 2008, 2009; Steemers, 2004). Thus, the TV commissioning editors and channel executives from these broadcasters have traditionally wielded tremendous influence over which documentaries and types of documentary are produced, how these are made, and where and when they are aired. (Doyle, 2002; Iosifidis, Steemers, & Wheeler, 2005; Steemers, 2004). But, in line with the new media paradigm, documentary films and the industries that produce, transmit and distribute documentary film can no longer be seen in isolation. Documentary today flourishes in both new and old forms – online, offline and across media and platforms, as new documentary portals, VOD services and delivery forms

merge and emerge (Bennett, 2008; Birchall, 2009; Doyle, 2011; Murdock, 2010; Vincente, 2009). They are made by blue chip production companies with Hollywood budgets or on mobile phone cameras by amateurs/producers/industry entrants. Increasingly, British broadcasters and the UK documentary industry are facing stiff competition, as well as new opportunities for reinvention and collaboration, from a variety of sides and sites (Burgess & Green, 2009). Although the 'old' media hegemonies of broadcasters and established production houses still dominate the market for audiovisual content, they no longer command the same oligopolistic position of defining documentary production that they previously enjoyed (Doyle, 2002). In response, production companies are expanding diagonally to become providers of multimedia content, while broadcasters are adapting their editorial policies and channel strategies to reinvent themselves as content providers across platforms in order to maintain their brand position in this new media landscape.

It is said that the people who made the real fortunes in the American gold rush in the Nineteenth century were the ones who sold the shovels. With digital and user-friendly production technology and the possibilities for multiplatform production, viewing and distribution, the number of new entrants to the market for producing and providing audiovisual content is exploding. This proliferation of new providers, platforms for, and ways of accessing documentary content online is matched by monopolistic and 'land-grabbing' drives from the 'old' media organisations, institutions and conglomerates as they do battle to be the ones who provide the railroads that take the shovels to the front and set up the outlets to sell them to the prospectors. Like the gold rush, the new territory of the internet is surrounded by as many myths as facts. In this unchartered and unexplored territory of seemingly unlimited potential, mythmaking informs the decisions, actions and strategies of the players as much as the facts do. This thesis explores the shifting positions, interactions and hegemonies in the documentary industry in this new media paradigm, and the real and imaginary changes that these have brought about.

As I write the final parts of this Ph.D. project, Google is buying up Samsung and Motorola, Netflix is taking on the British and French VOD market, the British broadcasters are piloting the international version of their joint global VOD service YouView, YouTube is beginning to commission original ad-funded content, and the debate about the internet as a common carrier is hotting up as Amazon enters the cloud storage market. As this thesis looks back over the period from 2006 to 2011 and analyses some of the key events, strategies (successful or not), thoughts (realised or not), and rapidly evolving developments within the British documentary sector, it is best seen as a set of observations along the way, and not as answers, conclusions or predictions about the future – or, for that matter, now.

The thesis centres on four articles and is in three parts. The first part accounts for the structure, theoretical and methodological framework of the thesis and the articles it encompasses. The second part comprises four articles (one published, one is a conference paper, one is forthcoming and in print, and one is in review). The first three articles explore how these shifting positions, interactions and competing forces influence the funding, commissioning, production and distribution of documentary films and the impact this has on the strategic and editorial decisions of producers and broadcasters in the UK documentary industry today. The final article examines a new hybrid documentary form, docu-games, that have been facilitated by, and have emerged in, this new digital context and asks in which ways games can mediate knowledge about actuality, and can therefore be seen to serve a documentary function. The final part of this thesis is a conclusion that places the articles in relation to the theoretical framework described in the first part and summarizes the findings of the articles.

Analytical focus - Why, when and where

Why documentary?

Opening the final chapter of *Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Film*, Carl Plantinga writes:

Nonfiction films and videos wield significant power in Western culture. They have a bardic function. They negotiate cultural values and meaning, disseminate information (and misinformation), prompt social change, and engender significant cultural debate [...] I turn to what some might consider the heart of the matter - a pragmatics of nonfiction films, considering their social uses and significances. (1997, p. 191)

He continues:

Quality of discourse in society depends on many factors, from access to the media among diverse groups, to freedom of press, to a willingness by media producers to investigate issues candidly and boldly, to the willingness of citizens to listen openly to others. It depends on a healthy intersubjectivity, as defined by Habermas. All things being equal, quality of nonfiction discourse also depends on a community dedicated to *truth-telling*. Because nonfiction make assertions about actuality, the reliability of these assertions is essential to their usefulness in the community. Only if discourse meets intersubjective standards of truth-telling can it be useful for the diverse functions it performs in a democracy. (1997, p. 219)

This thesis concurs with Plantinga's assessment of the potential power of documentary film and hopes to carry on his exploration of its uses and significance within a multiplatform context. If multiplatform broadcasting changes the conditions, context or even nature of documentary film, and if new technology and multiplatform mediation and disseminations affect the production, character or 'quality' of the discourse we, as citizens and as a society, can have, or the intersubjective exchanges possible, then considering documentary in a multiplatform context seems a pertinent project. I shall return these issues in greater detail in the following chapters.

Time frame

This Ph.D. project explores the impact of the internet and the possibilities, developments and opportunities this affords for documentary films across platforms, and its time frame has very much been determined by the emergence and gathering momentum in the mainstream of the technologies, sites and platforms that enable documentary films and content to be viewed, uploaded and shared online. Thus, the focus is on developments, on air and online in the documentary industry in the UK between 2006 and 2011. During this period, increased bandwidth, Web 2.0 tools and cheaper digital production technology enabled viewers to upload and download audiovisual content of a technical standard, quality and length which, by the end of this period, matched that of the TV channels. For the first time another medium, the internet, began to compete with and pose a real threat to the oligopoly on delivering high quality audiovisual documentary content that the established TV channels and documentary industry had previously enjoyed.

Video online predates 2006, and the ability to view, upload and share documentary content online gained impetus with the launch of YouTube in June 2005. Because of its user-friendly interface and the way it embraces both community and commercial interests and drives, YouTube quickly became the leading video sharing and viewing site in the western world (Burgess & Green, 2009; Snickars & Vonderau, 2009). The experience of watching long-form audiovisual content, and especially documentaries online, entered and became cemented in the mainstream in the UK, with the launch of the VOD platforms of Channel 4 and the BBC in 2006 and 2007 respectively. While the focus of this project is on developments between 2006 and 2011, these have roots back to events, practices and trends that predate 2006. In the widest sense, this Ph.D. explores the consequences of interweaving technological, cultural, institutional and socio-economic changes in broadcasting, production and distribution for documentary films and content in the UK. Therefore, to provide background and context, this thesis will occasionally reach back to the culture and practice of amateur film in TV production dating back to the

1960s and 1970s¹ (Chapman & Allison, 2009; Jenkins, 2009). It will also refer back to the impact of the internet and digital transmission, production and reproduction technologies on the broadcasting industry as a whole (its institutions, producers, audiences and consumers), as well as on documentary film itself before 2006.

Geographical orientation

This thesis revolves around the impact of digitisation, the internet and especially Web 2.0 on documentary film. As the world wide web is precisely that, the scope of the thesis is global. However, there is an inherent Anglo-Saxon bias in this project and a particular emphasis on documentary film production in the UK. This is, in many ways, necessitated by the subject matter.

It is particularly relevant to focus on British documentary film production, industry and broadcasting because the UK's documentary output is at the forefront of documentary production and distribution globally. In terms of overall TV production and exports of documentary films, the UK takes second place to the US, but is well ahead of its other nearest competitors, France and Australia. Furthermore, the UK supplies the majority of documentary and factual programmes to European buyers in terms of volume, and is the largest exporter of factual programmes and formats to the US both in terms of volume and value (PACT, 2009; Steemers, 2004). According to PACT², BBC Worldwide, the BBC's commercial arm is the world's largest single exporter of documentaries (Author's interview with Director of PACT, John McVay). Jeanette Steemers and others also note that British documentary and factual output have international reputation for quality, innovation, originality and strong storytelling skills. European factual buyers acknowledge the British documentary tradition and its influence on their national documentary schools, and therefore British factual output is often preferred to its American counterpart (2004, pp. 161-163).

In terms of multiplatform broadcasting, the BBC and Channel 4 have pioneered the transition from traditional TV networks to multiplatform broadcasters. The BBC has had an online presence since 1994 and, as already mentioned, launched its VOD service the iPlayer in 2007. Channel 4's VOD service 4oD was the first in the world when it launched in November 2006. In 2008, the UK was the second largest user of online On Demand services behind the US (2008). English is also the dominant language of the internet in the western world, and the

¹ Henry Jenkins traces the activities and audiovisual productions of fan communities and participatory culture in the media back to the amateur publishing of science fiction fans in the 1920s (2009).

² PACT, the Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television is the UK trade association representing and promoting the commercial interests of independent feature film, television, digital, children's and animation media companies.

websites, that have become leaders in the delivery of audiovisual content, more often than not use English as their main language. For example, the two largest platforms on which documentary content flourishes online are YouTube and Vimeo, owned by the American companies Google and InterActiveCorp, respectively.³

³ Statistics from Alexa. The Web information Company, August 2011
(http://www.alexa.com/topsites/category/Computers/Internet/On_the_Web/Web_Applications/Video_Sharing)

Part 1 - The problem of now and the need for a variety of approaches

Documentary film and content in a multiplatform paradigm and on converging and diverging platforms do not only exist in the intersection between 'old' and 'new' media, they also exist between academic disciplines, theoretical and methodological approaches. The form and structure of this thesis, the choice of theories that underpin it, as well as the selection of empirical data, methods and methodologies reflect this.

Whereas the critical traditions of documentary research, network theory, communication and cultural studies are well established in academic research and discourse, production studies and research into multiplatform production, programming and distribution are relative newcomers. This is reflected in the buzz, business and busyness surrounding these areas of study: Festivals and conferences focussing on production issues and the practices of the creative industries are increasing in number; papers and articles on these subjects are continually being called for; and numerous books, special issues of journals and reviews are either in print or being published. All of these explore new research methods, tools and critical approaches to production or multiplatform studies and/or seek to explain phenomena within these fields. Exciting as this is, the increasing volume of publications and literature and the consequent continual repositioning of thinking in the field, do not make the critical study of these areas straightforward. This state of affairs has informed the overall structure of this thesis. Writing in the form of a series of articles rather than a monograph has allowed me to engage with this continually changing body of research and take part in the discussions that are currently taking place as they unfold.

Analysis of audiovisual content places itself in the critical traditions of aesthetic, visual and cultural theory and can, of course, be explored from these perspectives. However, interactive and '360' content, and, within this, multiplatform documentaries, challenge, by very name and nature, established critical categories and terminology, and, as Henry Jenkins, Yokai Benkler, Axel Bruns and many other critics have argued, the relationship between producers, broadcasters/distributors and users/audiences/consumers of audiovisual content (Benkler, 2006; Bruns, 2007; Jenkins, 2006). This has informed the choice of theory used in this thesis, as I shall return to on the following pages.

Furthermore, interactive and multiplatform content is in itself an evolving category. Multiplatform documentaries as forms and films are constantly being developed, produced, distributed and explored. In this process, broadcasters and the production industry are, as a matter of course, ahead of academic analysis and critical thinking: programmes need to be produced and content published, aired or uploaded before they can receive critical attention. Academic research into developments within this field can therefore not solely rely on the traditions of scholars and academics, but must also draw on other sources that can illuminate aspects of, and

developments in multiplatform documentary at this time. These observations have informed the methods and methodology as well as the selection of empirical data of this thesis and have influenced considerations relating to the research design's validity and reliability. In the following pages, I will outline, firstly, the structure of this thesis, then place its articles in a wider theoretical framework and, finally, account for the methods and methodology used.

1 The structure

This first part of the thesis outlines the structure, charts the analytical framework and the research design within which the articles place themselves. The second and main part of this thesis consists of four peer-reviewed articles in journals or chapters in anthologies (from this point onwards, these will collectively be referred to as 'articles' in order to distinguish them from the 'chapters' in this thesis and avoid the composite 'article/chapters'). Each article is based on a theoretically informed case study that explores one specific aspect of documentary in a multiplatform world. The third part is a conclusion summarising the main points of the articles and the multiplatform context that they place themselves within.

Article 1. Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing: The Impact of Online Funding and Distribution on the Documentary Film Industry in the UK describes changes to documentary budgets and funding in the UK since the millennium. It explores how new ways of funding and distributing documentary films online, such as crowdfunding, P2P distribution and pay-if-you-want schemes, impact both on the ways in which documentaries are made and distributed today, and on the kinds of documentaries that will be produced in the future. Also, it examines how online financing models impact on the documentary industry, its producers, traditional funding models and funders. Following the money, it asks, who really benefits? The first section of this article charts trends in British documentary budgets in the last decade and explores how changes in financing impact on the production of documentary films. The second section focuses on new ways of funding and distributing documentary films online. Drawing on case studies of crowd investment schemes, crowdfunding and P2P distribution; interviews with documentary and multiplatform producers and commissioners, as well as on statistics and annual reports from broadcasters, lobbyists and regulators, I will argue that in real terms there has been a decline in and a polarisation of documentary budgets in the UK, and that, as a result, producers are increasingly looking to the internet to fund their documentaries. However, an online financing market suspended between *ad hoc* funding and long-term recuperation has consequences for the documentary industry, the kinds of documentaries made, the subjects they explore and the ways in which they are produced. This article was published in the peer-reviewed international journal *Media, Culture & Society* in September 2012. It is also an expansion of a peer-

reviewed article Dox Online which was originally published in Danish in the film journal *Kosmorama* in June 2010. Although largely adhering to the points made in this previous article, Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing also contains updated information and statistics, pertinent new case studies as well as evaluations and revisions of some of the case studies from the original article. It also expands on the financial aspects of crowdfunding and is more critical of the complexities of the apparent successes of crowd financing schemes. The original article Dox Online is appended to this thesis for reference.

Article 2. Channels as Content Curators – Multiplatform Strategies for Documentary Film and Factual Content in British Public Service Broadcasting is the first of two articles that examine how old and new broadcasters of documentaries are renegotiating their positions in the emerging multiplatform mediascape, with an emphasis on how new documentary sites and user generated content (UGC) affect the editorial decisions and strategies of ‘old’ media institutions and broadcasters. It explores the different strategies that the two publicly owned British broadcasters, the BBC and Channel 4 have employed to expand their brands online, and reinvent and establish themselves as curators of documentary content portals, in order to secure their positions both as leading providers of documentary films and factual content across platforms, and as global cultural gatekeepers. This article shows that these multiplatform strategies impact on traditional business and marketing methods, as well as on the commissioning and scheduling of documentary films and content. As broadcasters begin to operate as curators of multiplatform content, their commissioning editors renegotiate their definitions of what documentary content is, should and can be. Also, although documentary streaming and downloading sites proliferate online, the article argues that traditional media oligopolies are still mirrored across platforms. Thus in the maturing multiplatform world, traditional media hegemonies are not so much democratised and reinvented, but on the contrary, consolidated and reinforced. Channels as Content Curators – Multiplatform Strategies for Documentary Film and Factual Content in British Public Service Broadcasting is in peer review.

Article 3. Newsjacking the Media: Video Ambushing and AV Astroturfing analyses what happens when traditional media collide with viral videos and user generated content online. Through analysis of case studies of video ambushing and AV astroturfing, this article examines how established organisations use the narrative strategies, conventions and aesthetics of documentary film and activist media in videos circulated online to punch through the news agendas of traditional media institutions and impact on the editorial, programming and scheduling decisions of terrestrial broadcasters. Placing these cases in a historical context, I will argue that while the platforms on which video ambushing and astroturfing occur and the technology used are new, the practice of video ambushing and astroturfing are not. The organisations and actors who use video ambushing and astroturfing as tools are building on traditions of journalistic, documentary, activist practices and conventions.

However, this article will also demonstrate that while the internet and UGC has inarguably changed the dynamic and paradigm of broadcasting today, the historical hierarchies of power and media hegemonies are still essentially in place, and the gatekeepers, who decide what rises to prominence online or is broadcast on TV are still in charge. This article is to be published in the peer-reviewed anthology, *Media Interventions* (edited by Kevin Howley and published by Peter Lang) in the spring of 2013.

The final article of the thesis shifts the focus from the industry level analysis of the documentary industry of the previous three chapters, to a theoretical and textual approach to an emerging, interactive hybrid form, the so-called docu-games. Article 4. Documentary at Play explores games as expressive media, as well as combines documentary and games theory to examine in what ways docu-games reference reality and disseminate knowledge about actuality. This article is the hardcopy of a paper – also called Documentary at Play – which was presented at the conference *New Documentary Formats*, at the Department of Film & Media at Copenhagen University on March 30th 2012. Another version of this paper is to be published as a chapter in the anthology *Online Credibility and Digital Ethos: Evaluating Computer-Mediated Communication* (edited by Shawn Apostel and Moe Folk published by IGI Global) December 31st 2012. This chapter is appended to this thesis for reference (appendix V). The article was co-written with Assistant Professor Anne Mette Thorhauge, Department of Film and Media, Copenhagen University. Thorhauge is the main author of the subchapters on games theory, as well as the analysis of *Kuma Wars* and *Global Conflict: Palestine*. I am mainly responsible for the section on documentary theory and history as well as the analysis of the database documentaries *Gaza/Sderot* and *Model Agency*. The overall concept and theoretical framework was developed in collaboration and the rest of this article was co-written.

The final part of this thesis is a conclusion as well as a summary in English and in Danish (as required). Transcriptions of the interviews, an index of key terms and definitions, the article Dox Online and the chapter Documentary at Play make up the appendix.

Writing a thesis that consists of a series of articles has resulted in a few stylistic curiosities. Each article is printed verbatim and exactly as it has appeared or will appear in its publication and in accordance with their respective style guides. As a consequence there are irregularities in formatting, spelling and styles, between articles. Although I have taken the liberty to change the font and spacing of the articles, no other stylistic changes have been made. This also means that references follow each article but that these also reappear in the references list for the thesis as a whole.

2 Thinking about multiplatform content and contexts

The audiovisual world of Web 2.0 and the latter half of the 2000s is a fickle one. Not a month has gone by without the launch of another application or site that allows us to interact with each other and upload, view and share audiovisual content. The number of social networks, audiovisual apps and sites seem to proliferate exponentially with many going in and out of fashion and business. This is of course a general problem for internet research, as Klaus Bruhn Jensen observes: 'The internet is a moving target for developers, users and researchers alike.' (2011, p. 55)

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework of this thesis. Because this thesis explores documentary films and the documentary film industry in the UK in a multiplatform context, it examines not only changes to documentary films and the documentary industry, but also shifts and developments in the mediascape at large. As previously mentioned, its approach is multi-disciplinary and draws on a variety of theoretical positions. Many of these overlap or draw inspiration from each other and the grouping and differentiation of the theoretical positions described here should not be seen as attempts to segregate, but as outlines of directions of thought that, at least in this thesis, essentially interweave and complement each other rather than occupy opposing positions. Writing in the article format has meant that there is no unified or grand theory spanning the articles in this thesis. Each article focuses on one aspect of documentary in a multiplatform context and applies the theories considered appropriate to explore this. It has also meant that the same theory is employed in a variety of ways and aspects of it are explained in detail in several places in this thesis. In order to avoid unnecessary repetition I will, where possible, refer to the discussion in later articles rather than unpack these theories in detail in this chapter.

In the following pages, I will provide a brief literature overview of the main theoretical positions within which the articles of this thesis are situated. I will then elaborate on these theories by putting them into play in the context of the main trends and tendencies that have characterised the timeframe of this thesis, that is, from 2006 to 2011. Thus, theoretically informed perspectives will be offered on, firstly, the audiovisual mediascape at large; secondly, the UK broadcasting ecology and documentary industry; and thirdly, documentary films, their aesthetics, forms, genres and production methods in a multiplatform context. This is, firstly, to provide a historical backdrop for this Ph.D. project and outline the contexts in which multiplatform documentaries occur, and, secondly, to map out and critically engage with what is new about documentary today as well as to draw attention to what remains the same. Thirdly, it is to illustrate that the developments and events explored in this thesis are in no way fixed, conclusive or static. Research into the ways in which Web 2.0, digitisation and

multiplatform broadcasting have impacted on documentaries is like studying the structure and statics of blancmange: every new development reverberates through the entire field (although it generally ends up settling into a recognisable shape). The arguments and research results put forward in this thesis must therefore be seen as preliminary observations about advances and events in a particular timeframe, in a mediascape in continual movement. In the final pages of this chapter, I will sum up by deliberating on the choice of theory.

Literature overview

Since the millennium, film and media studies have witnessed the rise of a body of work that – in its widest sense – deals with (factual) audiovisual content in a multiplatform context and the ways in which digitisation is changing the conditions for media industries, institutions and producers; audiences and content users; programmes and content; and platforms. The authors of this body of work have much in common. Firstly, they acknowledge that the mediascape, its content and industry is changing, but as an evolution rather than a revolution. Secondly, most of these thinkers see media content and production contexts both as entities worthy of study in themselves, and as parts of larger socio-institutional, economic, industrial and political contexts, and thus call for analysis to take place on both micro and macro levels. Thirdly, they see the triumvirate of producer-text-audience⁴ as increasingly interconnected, although many still use this structure as a useful way of differentiating between different stages of creative, institutional and industrial processes (indeed, many anthologies structure their chapters according to this taxonomy). Although the particular focus of these critics differs widely depending on the particular topic of their studies, their articles cover much of the same ground albeit from different perspectives.

(Multiplatform) television theory and production studies

In addition to documentary theory, two schools of thinking are particularly influential on the framework of this thesis. The first, coming mainly from a European perspective and from television studies, is propounded by the anthologies *Relocating Television* (Gripsud, 2010) and *Television as Digital Media* (Bennett & Strange, 2011), in which the authors reflect on the role of television and television programmes in a digital and multiplatform world. This, too, is the subject of *Changing Channels* (Steemers, 1998) and *Seeing Things* (Ellis, 2000), although both predate the timeframe of this thesis, and is also covered in Petros Isifidis, Jeannette Steemers and Mark

⁴ This tripartite model is referenced in the recognition that, although it is the implicit premise of much research, as Klaus Bruhn Jensen points out, the three positions of this model are increasingly hard to segregate, both from each other and from the social and cultural contexts within which they exist (2012, p. 67).

Wheeler's *European Television Industries* (2005). The institutional dynamics of the BBC in the UK have been chartered by Georgina Born from an anthropological perspective (2005), and the question of how Public Service Broadcasting (PBS), or public service media, as Niki Strange believes this is best described (2011, p. 136), places itself in a multiplatform world has been explored by Graeme Turner (2011), Graham Murdock (2010), and James Bennett (2008). The theories of Jeanette Steemers (2011), Caroline Dover and Annette Hill (2007), as well as Niki Strange and James Bennett (2008, 2011) about the relationship between TV channels' commissioning strategies and their content in a multiplatform context have also informed the institutional analysis of this thesis.

Originating in the US, production studies emphasises production processes and industrial frameworks both in the television and film industry, and also in the wider audiovisual production and distribution sector. Here, the anthology *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (Mayer, Banks, & Caldwell, 2009) has set the scene for studies of production practices and industry workforces especially in Hollywood, US independent film and television; while *New Media: Theories and Practices of Digitextuality* (Everett & Caldwell, 2003) has a similar focus with specific reference to the production of digital media. John T. Caldwell's early work focuses on the television industry, while his later work explores media texts and production environments in general (1995, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2011). Caldwell's thinking about industries and production processes largely did away with the notion of the auteur as sole creator, a position that is also central to this thesis and its perception of the creative production process of documentary content. Amanda D. Lotz and Horace Newcomb's descriptions of the interconnectedness of levels of analysis of media texts and contexts have also been an influence on both the methodology and theory of production studies (2009b; 2012). In her introduction to *Beyond Prime Time: Television Programming in the Post-Network Era*, Lotz states: 'industrial practices and norms affect the creative output of television' (2009a, p. 4). In the UK context, this is echoed by, among others, Niki Strange, who points to the 'need to closely study both the production practices and texts of digital TV in tandem with their economic and/or policy structures' (2011, p. 136), and John Corner who writes, '[...] the requirement to locate film and television output within the researched settings of political, economic and cultural power needs to be a feature of any new phase of scholarship in the area' (2009, p. 26). This integration of political and cultural economy, industrial ecology, production practices and documentary output is central to the thinking of most authors listed here, and is also one of the central tenets and approaches of this thesis.

Both schools branch out and merge into particular areas of research. From a global perspective, Graeme Turner charts the socio-political and technological factors that decide the vastly different ways in which digitisation manifests itself in national media environments (2011). In media economics, Jeanette Steemers' *Selling*

Television (2004) examines UK TV distribution networks and patterns and Gillian Doyle's work explores the economic ramifications of the international media industries at large (2002) as well as the specific economics of British television in a multiplatform context (2011). Zvezdan Vukanovic identifies six factors to stay ahead in the new media landscape based on analysis of the five largest media conglomerates in USA (2009). Caldwell looks at the industrial economics of 'worker-generated', 'producer-generated' and 'user-generated' content across audiovisual platforms (2008, 2009, 2011). Henry Jenkins' thinking about the relationships between brands, fans and participatory culture has been hugely influential on interpretations of the dynamics and impact of peer production and participatory culture on the established media economies. Yokai Benkler's contribution to the understanding of the evolving field of the economics and value of media productions and content in online spaces has provided a framework in which to explore the social aspects of the differences between online and offline digital economics (Benkler, 2006; Jenkins, 2006, 2008). These topics are also explored with specific reference to YouTube and its institutional logic, workings and conflicting interests by Jean Burgess and Joshua Green (2011; 2009).

Both strands of thinking seek to understand specific media and production phenomena in the context of the effects of convergence and divergence in the mediascape, put forward by, amongst others, but most comprehensively, Henry Jenkins (2006) and Klaus Bruhn Jensen (2008). Both schools also emerge from the large number of theories that seek to explain how the internet and digitalisation impact on media and society by, among many others, Manuel Castells (1996, 1998), and, previous to him, Howard Rheingold (2000) and Nicolas Negroponte (1995). Focussing on the overarching affects of web culture and without a specific focus on the media, James Slevin, anchoring his thinking in Anthony Giddens' analysis of the consequences of modernity, analyses the impact of the internet on institutions, individuals and organisations (2000).

Drawing on television theory, production studies and network theory, the above critics have provided a wider framework for thinking about the digital mediascape that documentary films place themselves in. Based on their work, this thesis rests on the assumption that the internet and widely affordable and accessible audiovisual production and distribution technology have impacted on the mediascape and caused a shift in the relationships and power dynamics between institutions and players. These changes might originate as much in the imagination of the documentary industry as they do in actual physical factors and causes, but they do matter and affect the industry and how it works all the same. And, although critics disagree on the causes, impact and scale of these, few disputes that changes – real and imagined - are afoot. A further assumption of this thesis is that these changes impact on documentary film, affect the documentary industry, and the way documentary films are

produced, viewed and distributed, and this in turn, feed back into and influence the media industry and society at large too.

Documentary theory

Focusing on new as well as digital developments in the practice and theory of documentary film, the anthology *Rethinking Documentary: New Perspectives. New Practices* (Austin & de Jong, 2009) in many ways reflects the purpose of this thesis. Its chapters take up central issues in documentary theory while also acknowledging the importance of production practices, commissioning frameworks and digital developments within the area of documentary, as well as its related forms, genres or neighbouring areas, such as docu-soaps, reality TV and online documentary permutations and viewing spaces. This book also covers areas that have hitherto received little attention from documentary scholars, for example, Wilma de Jong's dissection of the funding of feature documentaries (2009) and Annette Hill's examination of audiences' reception of the documentary genre (2009). However, it also revisits some of the central themes in the field of documentary theory⁵. John Corner takes stock of the developments in documentary film theory from the 1970s and charts three main theoretical directions in this field: firstly, theories of the definition of documentary; secondly, work that explores its aesthetics and genres, and, finally, research into cognition and the ontological and epistemological constitution of the documentary image. Corner, who was himself one of the first to factor in institutions and socio-political organisations as agents that influence both documentary form and discourse (1996), concludes by advocating the continual importance of documentary research, but with renewed emphasis on wider socio-institutional contexts (2009, p. 26). In his chapter *Evidence, Rhetoric and Documentary Film*, Bill Nichols revisits his earlier work on rhetoric, or 'voice' and ideology, in documentary films (2009) as well as the discussion about the relationship between documentary film and reality that has raged since the birth of the genre. Nichols takes this opportunity to take a swing at the French postmodernists' scepticism towards the reality, hegemony and ideology behind the image. Starting by

⁵ Although the rise of first-person documentary and entertainment format that draw on documentary tradition and conventions, such as docu-soaps and reality shows, are not the topic of this thesis, it belongs to the history of documentary research also to mention Michael Renov's thinking about the (auto-)biographical documentary, a distinctive direction in documentary theory (2004, 2009) that has inspired a body of thinking about the representation of self and tendencies of intimisation in docu-soaps, reality TV formats and game shows by amongst others Anne Jerslev (2004), Jon Dovey (2000) and Laurie Outlette and James Hay (2008). In line with Giddens' understanding of increasing self-reflexivity as a condition of modernity, Jerslev anchors strategies of intimisation and the rise of first person documentary to the socio-political reality of the 1970s and the necessity of making the personal political in order to place the (lack of) rights of women, ethnic and sexual minority groups on the political agenda. Outlette and Hay see lifestyle TV as the logical consequence of this trend and as the ultimate signifier of neo-liberalism. Merging production and documentary studies, Jon Dovey's *Freakshow* (2000) also couples the rise of the first-person-documentary to changes in the documentary industry and production process and in line with this, Jane Chapman explores the theoretical and practical production issues of documentary films and their industry (2007; Chapman & Allison, 2009). Thus these critics, too, anchor developments in documentary film to changes in the socio-political context.

juxtaposing Plato's suspicion of rhetoric with Aristotle's endorsement, Nichols dismisses suspicion of the referentiality or evidentiality of documentary that is based on critiques of the remediation of the image and the form or rhetorics of documentary films. For Nichols, documentary is always ideologically inflected, but the evidence of the image is both part of and external to discourses within which it exists. He concludes, 'Style, form, and voice are the heart and soul of persuasive engagement, and persuasive engagement is at the core of political discourse and social practices, whatever their ideological consequences. We inhabit an area that is fully within the shadow of ideology.' (2009, p. 37) Thus, although both reality and representation are politically charged, and documentary is constructed from images and rhetorics, it refers to facts and actuality. First publishing in the early 1990s, and remaining key theorists within the field to this day from respectively a British and American perspective, Corner and Nichols defined documentary films and, focussing on modalities, tropes and techniques as constituting defining documentary genres, established studies in documentary films as a field worthy of critical enquiry (Corner, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2009; Nichols, 1991, 1994, 2009).

Taking the thinking of Corner and Nichols one step further, Carl Plantinga, Paul Ward and Ib Bondebjerg draw inspiration from David Bordwell's cognitive and formalistic approach to film analysis (1985). Anchoring their documentary theory in Bordwell's cognitive schemata as well as in rhetorics, Ib Bondebjerg (2008, forthcoming 2013) and Carl Plantinga (1997, 2005) see documentary and its genres as based on the interplay between, on the one hand, cognition – human beings are hardwired to instinctively understand of the differences between fact and fiction – and on the other, the constellation of the context in which the film emerges and the socially negotiated contract between the film-maker, the film and its audience. Paul Ward's work on the topic of drama documentary takes a similar approach (2005, 2009). Plantinga, Bondebjerg and Ward's understanding of documentary is that it is an assertion about reality that is cognitively, contextually and contractually constituted. This perception and definition, however, does not preclude textual analysis of documentary nor does it neglect nor ignore the fact that there are certain forms and means of expression that are more commonly used in documentaries than elsewhere, for example the use of the interview, voice over narration, archive footage, etc. Rather, the assumption is that these factors cannot be taken in isolation and must always be seen as a part of a cognitive as well as socio-economic context. Furthermore, because the documentary status of any audiovisual material is cognitively established and socially negotiated, it is not dependent on inherent formal or stylistic documentary properties. In the words of Plantinga: 'The distinction between fiction and nonfiction is not based solely on intrinsic properties, but also on the extrinsic context of production, distribution and reception.' (1997, p. 16) Thus, the ontological claim of 'the real' lies in the claim, assertion and cognitive understanding, not in the form or aesthetics. Or as Paul Ward puts it:

...the only unchanging thing about documentary is that it is a form that makes assertions or truth claims about the real world or real people in that world (including the real world of history); *how* it does this *is* something that is subject to change. (2005, p. 8)

Plantinga operates with three documentary forms: the formal, the open and the poetic⁶ which he bases on what he calls 'voice.' Voice is constituted by the narrative elements within a film, such as its structure and form, use of tropes and aesthetics, its organisation, inclusion or omission of documents and documentation, its narration and point of view (1997). Inspired by Plantinga, Bondebjerg operates with four documentary genres: the authoritative documentary, which bases itself on the formal voice, the observational documentary, characterised by the open voice, the poetic-reflexive founded on the poetic voice, and the fourth genre, the dramatised documentary⁷. Central to both Plantinga and Bondebjerg's theories is that inherent in each form or subgenre is a different reference to reality. Each occupies a different epistemic position: epistemic authority, epistemic openness, epistemic hypothetical and epistemic-aesthetic. Epistemic authority and epistemic openness have in common a strong anchorage in the presentation of facts; however, they differ in the ways that they represent these. The authoritative documentary sets forth an assertive argument about the world, whereas the observational documentary shows the audience a piece of lived reality that is open to interpretation. The dramatised and poetic-reflexive documentaries are less focussed on the presentation of facts. The dramatised documentary varies in its forms, for example it dramatises real events or presents fictitious events in a documentary form, for example in a contra-factual 'what if' documentary. The poetic-reflexive documentary often explores and reflects on the representation of reality in itself and thus this documentary genre often takes a highly aesthetised form, drawing attention to its medium, the production process and techniques as well as the very act of representing reality. In both cases this is a hypothetical statement exploring how things might be, or have been, or how people in communities might react should a certain situation arise (Bondebjerg, 2008, forthcoming 2013).

This thesis is indebted to the research of all documentary scholars above. It takes its understanding of documentary films from the documentary theories that base themselves on a cognitive, contractual and contextual understanding of this genre, and follows Plantinga and Bondebjerg's definitions and genre descriptions. These will be explored in greater detail later in this thesis, particularly in the article *Documentary at Play*. In line with Plantinga and Bondebjerg, documentary film is a genre with subgenres that occupy different epistemic positions in relation to the reality and facts, they represent. Documentary films can take a multiplicity of

⁶ Plantinga sees voice as creating rhetorical possibilities or 'poles', and prefers this term to 'genre.' (1997, p. 110)

⁷ Plantinga mentions the dramatised documentary in passing but does not fully explore it as a genre in itself.

different forms and storylines, employ diverse aesthetics, narration and sources of information, and exist on various platforms and media, but these generally adhere to and can meaningfully be explained by the framework of Bondebjerg's subgenres: the authoritative, the poetic-reflexive, the open and the dramatised documentary.

Following all the documentary scholars above, in this thesis, documentary film will be understood as a definable and recognisable genre that deals with reality. The aim of this thesis is not to enter into debates relating to notions, nature and definitions of reality, actuality and truth, but simply to state that I take a pragmatic approach to debates about representation, reproduction and reality. In line with the above documentary theorists, the premise is that reality, as such, is out there and always comes before the camera in both senses of the word. The implicit understanding is that the camera/producer/film-maker can represent reality in a specific, or a variety of ways, depending on ideology, orientation, voice or point of view, and aesthetic choices, but always based on actuality. Moreover, and as will be evident throughout the articles of this thesis, although the premise of this thesis is that the internet has brought about new production and distribution methods, has invigorated practices and preferences, and produced new forms and hybrids of documentary films, it has not fundamentally changed the definition of documentary film, nor its subgenres. Rather than overturning or undermining the documentary definitions and genres outlined by the critics above, these remain effective tools with which to explore and describe documentary in a multiplatform context.

Digitisation and the multiplatform mediascape

New channels, platforms, production technology, distribution and funding forms

The advent of digital technology has affected UK broadcasting, its producers and audiences – and thus the documentary film and industry - on at least four intertwining levels. Firstly, on the level of the technology of broadcasting, the media landscape changed with the proliferation of TV channels and the consequent challenge to national broadcast monopolies when satellites were introduced in the 1980s. This was extended when data compressing on multiplex-communication channels (MUX) became widely available in the UK from 1998. Increases in bandwidth since the 1990s extended this development online and onto mobile platforms (Bruhn Jensen, 2008; Doyle, 2002, p. 75) offering a multitude of diverging and converging platforms, channels and sites on which one can now watch documentary films. This proliferation of channels, sites and platforms has been matched by an ideological shift towards more market-led thinking and policies in broadcasting, as well as structural changes to the audiovisual production sector and the concentration and consolidation of pan-European and global media conglomerations, as observed by Steemers (Steemers in Iosifidis, et al., 2005, p. 10).

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, pan-European media corporations bought up smaller independent companies and new media outfits to become multimedia superpowers, so-called superindies, like Endemol and Zodiak, and global media corporations have joined forces to promote their content through a single site or portal, such as Hulu, the portal owned by NBC and Disney or the BBC, Channel 4, ITV and Five joint venture, YouView. This trend, Bruhn Jensen notes, has been paralleled by a new crop of smaller companies delivering new, niche or boutique services (2008).

Secondly, on the industrial and production levels, advances in digital production technologies have fundamentally changed the way TV programmes and films are produced, edited and stored. Cheaper and more user-friendly digital production and post-production technology and tools have made video, programme and documentary making more accessible to industry entrants and hobbyists alike (Chapman & Allison, 2009; Ellis, 2010; Turner, 2011). It has also dramatically reduced the time and cost of production, post-production and distribution of audiovisual material in terms of manpower, equipment and facilities (Gaunt, 2009). This has collapsed traditional production and post-production roles, and has led to both structural unemployment as well as the creation of new production roles, as Marilyn Gaunt and John T. Caldwell explore (Caldwell, 2008, 2011; Gaunt, 2009).

Thirdly, on a distribution level, digital technology and IPTV have improved access to audiovisual content for the individual user both in terms of the amount of audiovisual material available and ease of access to this both on a national and in global level. It has also allowed for non-linear viewing practices (Lotz, 2009a, p. 7). And fourthly, on an economic level, it has changed the funding, distribution and advertising models of commercial audiovisual content. In the first instance, multichannel TV has turned public service receiving audiences into consumers of commercial content (Iosifidis, et al., 2005, p. 1). Moreover, in the last decade and in addition to traditional TV spot advertisements, individually targeted, algorithm-based advertising across platforms has allowed for individualised advertising adding both to the broadcasters' revenue streams and well as their knowledge about their audiences and users. For producers, online distribution and new funding forms like crowdfunding have opened up ways of funding and distributing content outside of the traditional broadcasters and established distributors. These changes apply to all genres, including documentary film, and this has both disrupted and reinvented the businesses and industries that produce, distribute and fund documentaries.

Technology, creativity and industry in the networked world

The impact of digitisation outlined above has also been described as media convergence and divergence and Henry Jenkins (2001) and Klaus Bruhn Jensen (2008) provide some of the most comprehensive theories and breakdowns of the effect of these coexisting trends. Both note that convergence takes place on many levels. Henry Jenkins points to five types of convergence: technological, economic, social, cultural and global (2001) and Arild Fetveit adds aesthetic convergence as a sixth dimension (2007). Klaus Bruhn Jensen distinguishes between technological and social aspects of convergence. He lists eight types, and attributes four of them – the convergence of technology, multimedia, networks of distribution and platforms – to digital technology. The other four – industrial practices, consumption of multimedia, aesthetic and cultural convergence – are enabled by digital convergence and are resulting in new and divergent social practices and patterns of consumption (2008). In this context is important to highlight that both Jenkins and Bruhn Jensen see divergence and convergence as taking place as much in the physical and technical world as in the mind. Bruhn Jensen's eight types of convergence involve divergence of devices, technology and social activities. Of these, four are technical and four are social practices (2008, p. 115). Jenkins states: 'Convergence does not occur through media appliances, however sophisticated they may become. Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others.' (2006, p. 3) Thus, convergence and divergence coexist, in terms of platforms, industries, institutions and social practices. Both trends are as evident in the documentary and broadcasting industry as elsewhere in the mediascape.

In describing changes to the mediascape in general and documentary films in particular, this thesis seeks to steer clear of both technological determinism and technological scepticism. The premise here is that technology affords possibilities that can be, but do not have to be, or necessarily are, utilised by people in a certain way. Technology in itself does not determine behaviour, but is and becomes what human beings use it for. This too applies to global and national media contexts. Exploring the permutations and variations of regional and national digital media access and provision resulting from different technological, economic, political, historical and cultural influences, Graeme Turner writes:

With the multiplication of platforms, formats, production centres, and distribution systems, it is abundantly clear that the precise configuration of any nation's or region's experience of television is going to be the product of a complex interplay among a number of specific conjunctural factors - and only one of these will be technological. (2011)

Turner's list of the multiplicity of factors that influence national mediascapes and broadcasters is echoed in an American context by Lotz (2009a). But, in using the technology and tools available in a Web 2.0 world, technology in turn also shapes and informs not only how we use media, but also how we think and go about tasks in our everyday lives. Or, to quote the social media anthropologist Michael Wesch's in his keynote address at the Media Education Summit in 2009:

So the idea here is that media are not just tools, that media are not just means of communication, but thinking instead that media mediate our relationships and [...] collectively all of our relationships equal our culture. So we can say here that media changed, our relationships changed, we can also then further make a claim then that ultimately our culture changes, in sort of subtle, unexpected ways [...] So sort of drawing on some Marshall McLuhan here along with some anthropology, we shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us. (2009)

In *Connected*, the medical sociologist Nicolas Christakis and geneticist and sociologist James Fowler explore the connections between people and groups in society as a 'third way' of conducting behavioural research and bridging the gap between psychology and sociology. Through a series of case studies, Christakis and Fowler convincingly demonstrate that structural connections and physical networks shape how people organise their lives, and impact on factors like health, wealth and happiness. Human beings are hardwired to learn, live, love, work in and interact through connections and physical networks, and social network sites replicate these in an online environment (2009). Similarly, digital technology, platforms and tools do not only impact on viewing patterns and production modes, they are clearly a source of inspiration and creativity. For example, across the contemporary art scene, there is a sense of rediscovering techniques and skills as well as invigorating ideas and practices through making new, strange or simply more easily accessible art through digital technology. Peter Greenaway's editing toolbox bonanza in *The Pillowbook* (1996, UK) is early evidence of this, as is David Lynch's discovery of the aesthetics and usability of digital cameras and especially the PD150 camera (Liloia, 2007; Nemet-Nejat, 2007; Rowin, 2006). HD cameras and channels have given nature documentaries a new lease of life, a point I will return to at the end of this chapter. David Hockney's self-professed rediscovery of drawing in 2010 and the resulting exhibitions, *Me Draw on iPad* (Louisiana, Summer 2010, Denmark) and *A Bigger Picture* (Royal Academy, Spring 2011, London, UK) are also examples of this and Brian Eno's compositions have always been intertwined with digital technology, from composing the keyboard sounds for the Mac to developing the music and ambient art apps *Bloom* (2011, US) and *Trope* (2011, US) for the iPad. In these cases, digital technology does not simply add to or generate new skills and crafts, but also allows artists and practitioners in a wide variety of fields to rediscover and reinvent themselves, refresh and revitalise their practices, both in specific

media and in multidisciplinary fields. This has also been the case for documentary makers, documentary films and the surrounding industry, as I shall describe below. Indeed, it is a recurring theme across the articles here.

Listing these social, sharing and creative aspects of the internet and Web 2.0 tools is it also worth noting that the internet of course also allows businesses to be creative, invent new sales methods, build new business enterprises and discover new revenue streams, as for example Amazon's expansion first into books and then everything else illustrates. High Definition has not only added to and invigorated the aesthetics of documentaries. HD channels themselves have become a new product and marketing tool. Jostein Gripsrud reminds us that business, not other forms of activity, takes up 90% of internet activity, and as the remaining 10% encompasses not-for-profit sites like those of governments, museums and universities, little space remains for other forms of activity and creativity (2010, p. 19). It has also been noted by, amongst others, Karen S.F. Buzzard, Graham Meikle, David Morley and Graeme Turner that there has been a general trend for the internet to move from being non-commercial, or at least being perceived as such, to being dominated by commercial interests (Buzzard, 2003; Meikle, 2002; Turner, 2011 & Morley as cited in Turner, 2011). This is also reflected in the territorial provision of audiovisual services online. Users cannot roam freely but are restricted to watching content from their own territories. The BBC's iPlayer, for example, can generally not be accessed outside the UK⁸. According to Turner and Christine Quail, these territorial restriction are not determined by technological restrictions but are used to protect copyright and national monopolies (Quail, 2009; Turner, 2011). I shall return to the economics of video online later in this chapter, and, again in the article Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing.

Institutions in the multiplatform mediascape - broadcasting brands and brands broadcasting

Three of the articles in this thesis will pay particular attention to the meeting of 'old' TV broadcasters – especially the BBC and Channel 4 - and 'new' providers of factual audiovisual content online and their users in the UK. It is therefore useful to briefly map out the British broadcast institutions today and how they place themselves in relation to activities on other platforms – their own and that of other new media outfits – from a theoretical perspective.

⁸ An app for iPad that allows Canadian viewers to use iPlayer was launched in December 2011 and other territories are scheduled to be included during 2012.

The TV networks in the UK

The UK's four networked broadcasters (BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Five) can be divided into two publicly owned networks, BBC and Channel 4, and two privately owned, ITV and Five. In addition to these networks and their subsidiary channels, there is a plethora of cable and satellite channels, dominated by those owned by BSkyB as well as a smaller number of broadband dependent channels like the forthcoming Hulu, current.tv, and YouView.

Public Service Television networks - BBC and Channel 4

Although all four terrestrial broadcasters have public service remits, the BBC and Channel 4 particularly are required to provide a certain type of output, among this documentary. The BBC has longstanding documentary strands, such as *Panorama* (BBC, 1953-), the arts strand *Imagine* (BBC, 2003-), *Storyville*, a strand for international documentaries (BBC, 1997-) and the science strand *Horizon* (BBC, 1964-). BBC also commissions and produces single documentaries and series of documentaries for all its channels, BBC1, BBC2, BBC3 and BBC4. Channel 4 commissions single documentaries and serialised documentaries as well as having an ongoing commitment to its investigative current affairs strand *Dispatches* (Channel 4, 1987-), *Unreported World* (Channel 4, 2011-) and *Cutting Edge*, which covers domestic topics (Channel 4, 1994-). Although the total number of hours of documentary commissions has fluctuated over the years, commissions in these strands have not declined, although their budgets have done so in real terms, as I will argue in the article Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing. In fact, statistics from PACT showed an increase in factual and documentary commissions by the BBC and Channel 4 in 2009. Conversely, original documentary commissions by the ITV network has been dramatically reduced in recent years and on Five these have always been of a populist orientation (PACT, 2009).

Furthermore, in considering the public service broadcasters in a digital context, as outlined in the 2003 Communications Act and most recently in the 2010 Digital Economy Act, Channel 4's remit is to be innovative, experimental and distinctive, working across television, film and digital media. The BBC has a broad public service remit set out in its Royal Charter and Agreement, and its mission is to 'to inform, educate and entertain' through six public purposes: 'sustaining citizenship and civil society', 'promoting education and learning', 'stimulating creativity and cultural excellence', 'representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities', 'bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK', and 'delivering to the public the benefit of emerging communications technologies and services' (BBC, 2012). Prior to this the BBC had a remit to 'Build Digital Britain' (Strange, 2011). Thus, both the BBC and Channel 4 have specific remits to engage with new digital platforms, services and technologies.

The BBC has an in-house production section that produces approximately 75% of its programmes, while all of Channel 4's content, with the exception of its news programme, which is delivered by ITN, is produced by independent production companies. Both broadcasters are also under obligation to produce a minimum of 25% of their programming outside of London, defined as outside the circular M25 motorway, but this quota has rarely, if ever, been fulfilled (Ofcom, 2010a, 2011b; PACT, 2008, 2009).

Both the BBC and Channel 4 are publicly owned, but whereas the BBC is also publicly funded by the licence fee, Channel 4 is commercially funded by advertising and sponsorship revenue. This distinction is important when exploring their respective public service remits and documentary outputs because, although both are under public service requirements to provide certain types of programming, their ability to do so is dependent on different financial factors. The licence fee is negotiated with the UK government and the political climate of the time determines whether it increases or decreases. In recent years it has declined. The last settlement was in October 2011 and will run for six years. In 2010-11, revenue from the licence fee was £3513m, £299m from grant aid subscriptions from BBC World Service and £206m from the BBC's commercial arm BBC Worldwide. Of this £1801.3m was invested in TV programming and £140.7m in online services and content (BBC, 2011). Channel 4's finances are subject to fluctuations in advertising. In 2010-11, its annual budget was £935.2 million, up by 12.6% and £578m was invested into television and online content (Channel4, 2010-2011).

Commissioning statistics, structures and strategies of the UK networks

With the general changes to the mediascape described above, things have changed for the traditional broadcasting institutions as well. In the UK, the four terrestrial networks are, as already mentioned, the ones who commission the vast majority of primary TV commissions. In many respects TV programmes, including documentary and factual programming, continue to be commissioned, budgeted for, and transmitted much in the same manner as they were ten or twenty years ago. In the UK, 79% of programmes are still fully commissioned by a genre commissioner at one of the main broadcasters, who commissions in relation to scheduling requirements and available slots, channel brands and strategies, audience target groups and advertising potential (PACT, 2009, p. 14). This percentage is likely to be higher for factual and documentary content, as I will argue in the article *Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing*. However, although commissions by one of the four terrestrial broadcasters still dominate and account for the vast majority of commissions, this figure is down 11%, from 90% the previous year. It is reasonable to assume that an increasingly crowded and competitive globalised TV market on air as well as on the internet and across mobile platforms, new production tools and techniques

have shifted the hegemonies and practices of institutions, industry and production, as already described, and have contributed to this reduction in primary commissions. Thus, both traditional and new media practices and factors coexist, which, as Amanda Lotz points out in the opening paragraph of *Beyond Prime Time*, is important to bear in mind when researching the current practices and strategies of network television:

Television has long been defined by its daily schedule and the viewing habits that develop around it. Technologies like DVRs, the iPod and online video have freed audiences from rigid time constraints – we no longer have to wait for a programme to be ‘on’ to watch it – but scheduling still plays a major role in the production of television. (2009a)

Also, amidst these changes, the goals of the broadcasters remain the same, as Niki Strange and James Bennett remind us: ‘Whilst the digitalisation of television may bring about new textual, industrial and audience configurations, the goals for broadcasters remain the same: to attract viewers in a marketplace where there is increasing competition for screen-based leisure time.’ (2008, p. 108) Today and for now, the practices and strategies of television institutions must therefore be seen as much as extensions and continuations of previous and already established practices and protocols, as new developments.

Changes to commissioning structure of the BBC and Channel 4

The commissioning structures of both the BBC and Channel 4 are based on genre defined departments headed up by commissioning editors. At the BBC, there are commissioning editors for independent producers as well as executive heads of departments for in-house productions. In the mid 2000s, both the BBC and Channel 4 underwent a restructuring to facilitate a more integrated approach to programming and content across platforms. At Channel 4 this resulted in multiplatform commissioners being introduced in each genre commissioning department and an interdepartmental ‘crossplatform’ committee being set up. Today, Channel 4 pursues a strategy of commissioning for ‘verticals’ (themed internet portals that content and programmes can be clustered around), in order to drive and retain users between platforms (author’s interview with Stuart Cosgrove and Matt Locke, Channel 4). These verticals and their impact on documentaries are a central part of the analysis in the article Channels and Content Curators - Multiplatform Strategies for Documentary Film and Factual Content in British Public Service Broadcasting and will be described in more details in this article. At the BBC this commissioning restructure resulted in BBC Vision, integrating multiplatform and genre commissioning departments, and in the articulation and introduction of ‘360’ commissioning and programmes as a strategy in 2006. Both strategies are examples of what John T. Caldwell terms ‘second shift aesthetics’, i.e. digital programme strategies for the post-analogue and non-linear era that create user flows between and aggregate

texts that would otherwise be dispersed across platforms and temporality (2003), which I will return to on the following pages. Also, Caldwell's thinking as well as the BBC and Channel 4's online and multiplatform strategies will be explained and explored in greater detail in the article *Channels as Content Curators - Multiplatform Strategies for Documentary Film and Factual Content in British Public Service Broadcasting*.

Furthering cross-departmental and multiplatform⁹ collaboration whilst essentially holding onto a genre based commissioning frameworks makes sense on a theoretical level too. Lotz reminds us that specific genre traits also play into differences in funding, production and commissioning, and that there are variations and different conventions in production processes and practices of various types of programmes both online and offline. VOD works particularly well for certain genres, for example, documentary and drama, but less so for programmes where the novelty and news values are quickly dated like news and sports programming. Conversely, VOSDAL (Viewing-On-Same-Day-As-Live)¹⁰ is effective for time-specific programming like news, sports, reality TV and chat shows. In terms of funding and commissioning, drama traditionally commands higher budgets per hour than documentary. Drama will be commissioned for a limited run of episodes and will typically be scheduled in primetime. Conversely, factual and entertainment formats will be commissioned in bulk for smaller budgets per hour and much of it will be scheduled outside primetime (Lotz, 2009a, pp. 5-8). TV commissions always demand higher budgets than their online counterparts, which are often poorly or not budgeted for at all.

Public service media, IPTV and VOD

The majority of the articles in this thesis focus on the multiplatform output and institutions of Channel 4 and the BBC. As stated in the introduction, this is because these two channels have the largest documentary and factual output in the UK and also because both channels have pioneered VOD and the online presence of TV channels

9 The terms 'crossplatform' and 'multiplatform' programmes and programming are used interchangeably by academics and industry professionals and refer to the migration of different media content across media platforms, digital (TV radio, Internet, iPad, computer, mobile phone) as well as non-digital (e.g. printed newspapers, books, analogue TV, radio, computer). In the interviews conducted for this thesis and the material I have relied on for this thesis, it has very much been the case that 'multiplatform', 'crossplatform', '360' and 'transmedia' have been used almost as synonyms. TV channels seem to have a penchant for 'multiplatform' whereas festivals and awards, academics, software developers and gamers prefer 'crossplatform'. The BBC favours '360 programming, programmes and commissions' and 'multiplatform' and at a BBC Vision Open day in Glasgow on 7 May 2009, Martin Tricky, Commissioning Executive, defined 'multiplatform' as 'everything that isn't TV or radio'. Channel 4 also prefer the term 'multiplatform,' has multiplatform commissioners and refer to 'interactive', '360' and 'transmedia storytelling' when describing its commissions and programmes. However, Channel 4 also has a 'Head of Crossplatform.' In this thesis too, the terms will be approached with a certain flexibility and multiplatform and crossplatform seen as synonyms, because it seemed counterproductive and confusing to force uniformity over statements and quotations in which both terms are used. However, since this thesis focuses on the TV industry, multiplatform is the term of choice. For a full discussion of the differences between crossplatform and multiplatform, transmedia and 360 programming please see Appendix III.

10 According to BARB, 'VOSDAL viewing includes timeshift viewing viewed on the same day as the original broadcast. This is included in the overnight files released at 9.30am the following day. For example, if a film commences at 5.30pm and is recorded and then viewed later the same evening at 9.00pm, this viewing is captured and reported in the overnight file published the following day.' (2012)

globally. The BBC is currently the public service broadcaster with the largest online presence in the world. The adaptation and incorporation of internet sites in broadcasting was pioneered by the BBC's internet services, BBC Online, which began in 1994 and officially launched in 1997¹¹ (Wikipedia, 2010). But, with its public service remit, the BBC faces a dilemma due to the inherently commercial nature of the internet and announced in May 2010 that it would be scaling back its online activities to focus of the 'core mission' of delivering TV programming (BBCTrust, 2010; Sweney, 2010a, 2010b). Channel 4 has one of the largest online presences of the commercially funded, public service broadcasters in the English-speaking world. When it launched its VOD service, 4oD, in November 2006, Channel 4 was the first broadcaster in the UK to make its content available on an on-demand basis. 4oD was quickly followed by BBC's VOD service the iPlayer. Both services are free to use in the UK. Project Kangaroo, a joint VOD venture to deliver on-demand and subscription-free television programmes and other online content from all the terrestrial broadcasters – BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Five – to viewers' TV screens via broadband, was sunk by Sky Television's anti-competition injunction in 2009 (Sweney, 2009), but the idea and institutional will lived on in Kangaroo's reincarnation, Project Canvas. The project finally was approved and launched as YouView in the autumn of 2010 and became available in the UK in 2012. The ambition is to make this VOD service available on all platforms across the world.

Recent research has focused on the extent to which public service should and can be delivered across platforms, or if multiplatform effectively brings to an end the public service broadcasting era. As Georgina Born points out in the introduction to her anthropological study of the BBC, this discussion has been ongoing at least since the turn of the millennium. Moreover, the BBC as an institution has long been attacked for the – for some – conflicting idea and concept of public service broadcasting in a globalised and digital world, especially by the commercial broadcasters who would benefit if the BBC were to lose its licence fee (2005). Whilst this is not the central topic here, three articles are important in the context of thesis because they deal with the delivery of factual and documentary content across platforms with specific reference to public service remits. Also they explore, rather than simply dismiss, the potential of public service media in an online and multiplatform context. In her article *Multiplatform Public Service*, Niki Strange describes the preceding programme strategies and processes leading up to the BBC's 360 strategy in 2006. Strange explores the BBC's strategy of 'bundled projects' between 2001 and 2006 and analyses how the BBC moved from seeing programmes in isolation to focussing on 'projects' and the practice of grouping similar programmes together online and on TV as 'bundled

¹¹ Since 1994, the BBC has had an online presence supporting its TV and radio programmes. The website, BBC Online launched officially in 1997, after governmental approval to fund its online services through the TV licensing fee. It was first iBBC, then bbc.co.uk, reverting to BBC Online in 2008. Today, it is one of the world's largest websites with over two million pages and was in 2008 the 47th most visited website in the world.

projects.’ Starting with the DCMS¹² requirement for the BBC to ‘build Digital Britain,’ Strange argues that these changes in the commissioning structure reflected changes not only to the platforms available for transmission, but also to programming priorities and strategies. ‘Bundled projects’ can be seen as an attempt to extend the BBC’s public service broadcasting remit and become a ‘multiplatform public service provider’ of media (Strange, 2011). In *Networking the Commons: Convergence Culture and the Public Interest*, Graham Murdock makes the case that the BBC should act as a ‘switcher’ of public opinion and as such introduce audiences and users to the potential of internet portals for enhancing free public knowledge and education. The BBC, Murdock argues, already has four advantages in terms of implementing this: it has the digital infrastructure to do so, it has public funding, it has demonstrated viewer migration between TV and web and it has public trust. Although Murdock concedes that such a trajectory would be resisted by commercial channels and organisations, he advocates a new and wider public broadcasting remit that combines broadcasters, museums and universities to form a new, digital PBS public sphere (2010). Like Murdock, James Bennett uses the programmes and portals around the World War II commemorations to explore the extent to which 360 programming, interfaces and structuring of ‘viewflows’ across platforms has gone towards fulfilling the remits of ‘building digital Britain’ and providing a universal, national provision of public service across platforms. Bennett provides excellent analyses of the commemorative programming of the anniversary of D-Day and Dunkirk: the two drama-documentaries *D-Day* and *Dunkirk; We’ll Meet Again* (BBC, 2004), the live broadcast coverage of commemoration ceremonies and the online content that surrounded these. Here, the online site allowed users to upload video or post written memories and comments. It also hosted a mobile game and hubs for outreach partnerships that encouraged and supported ‘hard to reach’ non-IT-literate older audiences to get involved (Bennett, 2008, p. 289). Bennett convincingly argues that the BBC can fulfil a public service remit across platforms on a number of levels. The BBC’s commemoration coverage acted as a national event and thus fulfilled the BBC’s charter of ‘Building Public Value’ which is defined as a ‘shared moment that can bring the UK together around those things that bind us’ (BBC, 2004a, p. 76 (Bennett’s citation)) as well as fulfilling the corporation’s remit to ‘offer everyone a democratic voice and a means of contributing to the national debate’ (BBC, 2004a, p. 66 (Bennett’s citation)). Bennett concludes that the user-flows and content generated around these programmes not only enhanced the content and the users’ experience and knowledge of World War II, it also became an archive of footage and of first hand accounts of the event. Furthermore, it even enabled users who had hitherto had little experience of the internet to interact, take part and contribute to the content. Through outreach programmes and partnerships, the BBC empowered digitally disenfranchised and unskilled groups like World War II veterans and their families and gave them the tools with which to participate. Thus, Bennett argues, the BBC’s role in a digital context is not only

¹² Department of Culture, Media and Sport

informational, it is also educational and on this basis Bennett calls for a more nuanced and wider understanding of Public Service Broadcasting remits in a multiplatform context (2008).

Policies and power of public service media

The online strategies of the two publicly owned broadcasters, the BBC and Channel 4 were politically imposed and constituted in their charters (BBC, 2011; Bennett & Strange, 2008; Channel4, 2010-2011; Strange, 2011). The move towards providing audiovisual material online was not initially spearheaded by the TV networks themselves, and their strategies have been influenced by outside developments across the mediascape. Lotz notes that the American TV stations too were pushed; they did not jump:

Networks are not leading the way into the new era, rather television was being redefined by technologies, distribution possibilities, advertising practices and audience behaviours [...] Often the adaptation of practices encouraged, if not required, by digitization and globalisation reveals the arbitrariness of industry lore and other hegemonic practices governing cultural production. (2009b, pp. 35-36)

This thesis describes this collision of old and new in the mediascape and the problems, possibilities and permutations thrown up by this. In thinking about the ways in which these new and old players, participants, organisations and institutions seek to position themselves in this new mediascape in order to fulfil various public service obligations, make profits, maintain or gain market positions, it is hard to ignore the political processes, hierarchies, power dynamics and social and cultural capital that are played out in these interactions. In *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins cautions:

The term, participatory culture, contrasts with older notions of passive media spectatorship. Rather than talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules none of us fully understands. Not all participants are created equal. Corporations – and even individuals within corporate media - still exercise greater power than any individual consumer or even the aggregate of consumers. And some consumers have greater abilities to participate in this emerging culture than others.' (2006, p. 3)

Christakis and Fowler also argue that not all nodes in a network occupy equally central positions. Similarly, all players in the digital mediascape do not have the same status, power, skill, or organisational clout and ability to make an impact. In including engagement with digital technologies in the charters of the BBC and Channel 4, there is an implicit political belief that the public service broadcasters are in a prime position to drive

developments in this field. However, giving these networks the political backing and means to do so also gives the BBC and Channel 4 a competitive advantage and affects the political and economic hierarchies in the networked society. This has and is continuing to cause friction between the commercial and publicly owned media institutions (Iosifidis, et al., 2005, p. 27; Murdoch, 2009). In order to examine how different players interact and position themselves in this new media paradigm, the shifting and fluctuating positions of the mediascape will therefore be seen as a series of interactions in which differentiated power dynamics are played out (de Jong, 2009, p. 135).

Moreover, among their visions and optimism about the potential of Web 2.0 and participatory culture, Benkler and Jenkins also rightly predicted that the existing institutions and players of the old paradigm would not take the ensuing onslaught of new players, producers and online channels lying down (Benkler, 2006, p. 23; Jenkins, 2006). They predicted that organisations would either resist changes and real and imagined threats, or seek to hone this plethora of participation to suit their own business needs and interests. Therefore, TV's engagement with online will not only be seen as a politically imposed move to engage with online culture, it will also be understood as a tactical decision and strategic move to remain in charge as the dominant gatekeepers or watchers of culture in society and to maintain their positions as the foremost purveyors of audiovisual culture, as, among others Bennett and Strange, Jenkins and Benkler observe (Benkler, 2006; Bennett & Strange, 2011; Jenkins, 2006).

Privately owned and commercially funded TV and IPTV

Cable, Sky, Freeview and IPTV

As mentioned previously, digitisation has brought about the ability to compress and deliver data to create a plethora of new TV channels, transmitted by cable, satellite, or through the free-to-view set-top box, Freeview. ITV Digital collapsed in 2002 and since Freeview has featured all the channels of the terrestrial TV networks and Sky (Iosifidis, et al., 2005, p. 28). Online, in the spring of 2010 the ad-funded online VOD channel Seesaw began broadcasting previously screened programmes from Channel 4, Five and the BBC, but ceased to trade in the autumn of 2011 allegedly because of a lack of exclusive content. The American ad-funded and subscription-based VOD streaming service Hulu, a joint venture between NBC Universal (Comcast/General Electric), Fox Entertainment Group (News Corp) and Disney-ABC Televisions Group (The Walt Disney Company), which streams shows and exclusive trailers from NBC, Fox, ABC, CBS, and Nickelodeon, has been scheduled to launch in the UK since 2010, but has yet to do so. Current.tv pioneered crowdsourced and user generated

factual and news content online and offline, but in recent years its roles and mission have dramatically changed and it ceased to exist as a TV channel in the UK in the spring of 2012. The subscriptions based DVD rental and streaming site Netflix launched in the UK in the winter of 2011 to take on the Guardian and Amazon's joint venture lovefilm.com.

In addition to the online activities of these established media corporations, high street and commercial brands are also extending their presence online and entering the audiovisual broadcasting mediascape. Increasingly, organisations, institutions and business brands are moving into producing and providing audiovisual content online on their own sites or through designated channels on YouTube as part of their online advertising. On YouTube, for example, organisations and institutions as diverse as Berkeley University, the British Monarchy, the Vatican, Lady Gaga, Red Bull, Nokia, BMW and Sesame Street have their own channels, as does the BBC and Channel 4.

Social network sites

Social network sites and video sharing platforms are today hugely influential in promoting, distributing and – as we shall see – increasingly financing audiovisual content, programmes, films and documentaries. But it also seems likely that they will play a more integrated and larger role in the mediascape in the future. The function of social networks and video sharing sites are multi-faceted and they serve as, on the one hand, sites of as peer promotion and production, and on the other, platforms and portals delivering content. Also increasingly, they are commercial sites offering spaces for advertising, services and goods; and as John T. Caldwell notes, these sites afford ways of data mining the practices, preferences and purchases of their users (2011).

Social Media

On Monday 16 February 2009, the Guardian newspaper reported on and published statistics for the then new and upcoming, micro blogging-site Twitter, heralding it as the new Facebook (Kiss, 2009). On this same day, ITV announced that the early networking site Friends Reunited was up for sale. Friends Reunited had made losses since the next generation of social network sites, spearheaded by the likes of Facebook, MySpace and Bebo, had shown that they could provide the same service that Friends Reunited did, and more. It was during this mid-February weekend in 2009 that Twitter entered mainstream consciousness in the UK and even the conservative, but technology trend-spotting broadsheet the Daily Telegraph carried a full page spread on Twitter on the 13th of February. Fourteen months later, in the spring of 2011, Bebo's owners AOL announced that they were would either sell or shut down the site. Bebo's profits had fallen 143% between May 2008 and 2009 and made losses of

£1.1 million (Sweney, 2010c). The following year News Corporation sold MySpace which had all but been deserted by its members. News Cooperation had bought MySpace at its peak in 2005 for \$580m, in 2006 Google signed a \$900m deal to sell ads on the site, and by 2007 it had 300m registered users and was being valued at \$12bn. Four years later MySpace was sold to, among others, Justin Timberlake, for only \$35 million (Rushe, 2011). Today Facebook dominates the social networking scene. The site has 23 million users in Britain (winter 2011-12), and half of these log on every day, although in the summer of 2011 the site reported its first ever decline in membership. With its easy to use video embedding and sharing facilities, the introduction of Skype-like video conferencing apps, and the equivalent of 500 years of embedded video being watched on Facebook every day (YouTube, 2012), Facebook is a player in the distribution and sharing of audiovisual content market online. With the aggressive and expansionist strategies it has employed throughout its history, it seems likely that Facebook will continue to influence the audiovisual mediascape in the immediate future. In the summer of 2011, Google launched its own social network site Google+ and vowed to take on Facebook with a more subtle and selective approach to friending (Arthur, 2011). Facebook countered this by introducing tools to tier and group sections of friends. Twitter too has become a major disperser of video and 700 YouTube videos are tweeted and retweeted every minute (YouTube, 2012).

Online video sharing platforms

Since its public launch in December 2006, YouTube has become the world's leading platform for user generated video. Google bought the website in October 2006 for \$1.65billion and still owns it. Similar sites have followed (Vimeo, Dailymotion), but with one hour of video uploaded every minute and over four billion videos watched every day (YouTube, 2012) the popularity of YouTube is currently unparalleled (spring 2012). Producing and sharing videos in families, groups and fan communities has, as for example Jenkins has pointed out, a history going back to the 1960s (2009), but cheaper technology and the possibilities that Web 2.0 affords for uploading and sharing audiovisual material has taken these activities into the mainstream (Burgess & Green, 2009).

As previously mentioned, YouTube is also host to several TV channels, but unlike the various online TV networks described above, YouTube is a platform for sharing content and has currently no editorial or programming agendas. This is set to change, however. YouTube's current revenue sharing schemes could be seen as a kind of production or distribution funding (Schmidt, 2011). Google's CEO Eric Schmidt delivered the 2011 James MacTaggart Lecture, the keynote speech at the British TV industry's annual summit, the Edinburgh International Television Festival. Here he announced that, although the corporation would not editorialise and thus step on the turf of the TV stations, Google would begin to invest in original content (ibid.). This address in itself, the first ever given by someone outside of the TV industry, and in a lecture previously delivered by the

BBC's Director General Mark Thompson and Sky's Managing Director James Murdoch, underlines how seriously a player the TV industry considers Google.

Describing YouTube as a broadcast platform, a social network and a media archive, Jean Burgess and Joshua Green note, 'YouTube represents not so much the collision as the co-evolution and uneasy co-existence of 'old' and 'new' media industries, forms and practices.' (2009, p. 14) On YouTube, the interests and practices of commerce and community coexist peacefully as often as they collide. Mapping out the discourses that surround YouTube, Burgess and Green argue that much of the legal action and negative public perception against the activities that take place on YouTube are, at best, misguided and, at worst, criminalising shared cultural everyday practices and experiences. In the mainstream press, user generated content is perceived as something made by amateurs outside the creative industries, often having the potential to upset and threaten traditional media owners, production hegemonies and monetising models. Burgess and Green argue that this not only oversimplifies the diversity of activities that takes place on YouTube. It also ignores the fact that, firstly, much activity online is for private use only, but enters the public realm by the public nature of the internet. This, Burgess notes in a later article, is also noted by William Uricchio in his work on peer sharing and production and is also supported by recent research that shows that blogging in fact is less akin to citizen journalism than to the form of the diary and private information sharing (Burgess, 2011, p. 313 & 323). Secondly, this is a misunderstanding of the various roles of the users. The users are often seen simply as usurpers of other people's content, rather than as contributors, who put up their own (often commercially free, but socially valuable) content, or add value to the different activities and transactions that are already taken place online. Here Burgess is echoing Axel Bruns' thinking on the produser (2007) (Burgess, 2011; Burgess & Green, 2009). Based on an extensive empirical study of the content on YouTube, Burgess concludes that 50% of content on YouTube is user generated and 50% is commercial. 75% uploaded is by users, but not all of this is file shared or pirated (terminology dependent on political orientation and organisational affiliation). The vast majority of user uploaded material is vlogs, private home videos or chains of people mimicking original posts. The commercially uploaded material is mostly produced by users wanting to share gags and 'gotcha' moments with friends, implore them to 'look at this' or create memes. This content is thus of social value to the user and his/her network, but often of little commercial value in any other context. On this basis, Burgess and Green argue that user generated content on YouTube must be seen as much as a site for sharing and repurposing/private communication as one for file sharing or piracy for fan culture purposes. In a later article, User-Created Content and Everyday Cultural Practice: Lessons from YouTube, Jean Burgess writes,

[t]he prevalence of these clips and quotes point us towards thinking about how media content is used rather than how it is received [...] It is a lack of recognition of this convergence of everyday audience practice with user-led content creation in newly visible and connected public networks that creates so much confusion around the political economy of digital media production. (2011, pp. 322-323)

Burgess seeks to move beyond an 'active' versus 'passive' audiences binary position and calls for a reorientation towards use rather than production and reception.

In addition to this redefinition of the role of the audiences in these processes, there is also a need for a re-evaluation and redefinition of the monetary and social value of the transactions and productions that take place online.

The social and commercial values of audiovisual content on the internet

Following Burgess' call, the articles in this thesis focus on both the use of content online as well as its production and reception. It will replace Burgess and Green's active/passive audiences binary within a model where user activity places itself on a continuum. I will return to this. Moreover, it will reconsider the role of the exchanges and transactions – of content, information and value (social and well as monetary) – that take place between users, producers and broadcasters/networks in the light of new ways of generating, orchestrating (rather than scheduling), and negotiating content in a multiplatform context. Here this thesis will be inspired by Benkler's understanding of the social context of online transactions as well as John T. Caldwell's second shift aesthetics, the practice of orchestrating and organising user flows in a non-linear, digital content environment. It will do so in order to underline the proposition that runs through all the following articles: that most players and participants – institutions, professionals, amateurs, users and audiences – take on various roles in the multiplatform mediascape and are simultaneously generating, using, adding and attributing value to content in the multiplatform mediascape. In this process, the exchanges that take place take on new meanings, forms and structures.

The wealth of networks

In *The Wealth of Networks*, Yochai Benkler explores the viability of the networked economy from democratic, social and economic perspectives. Benkler first reminds us that any transaction is dependent on its social context and then demonstrates that the generation of value is different in the online sphere, compared to the traditional

offline commercial marketplace. Giving examples of the changes of meaning that take place if one, for instance, leaves money on the table after a dinner at one's friends' house or on the bed after a first date, Benkler reminds us of the paramount importance of the social context and implicit contractual understanding of any transaction. Making the case that greater participation makes for a more inclusive, self-reflexive and critical networked public sphere, Benkler sees information and knowledge sharing and P2P production as an alternative to the proprietary economies and mass media dominated public sphere that have hitherto prevail. This serves a democratic function. The networked information economy offer not only alternatives and counter-discourses that serve to police and counteract traditional media, it also:

[...] moderates the power of the traditional mass-media model, where ownership of the means of communication enables an owner to select what others view, and thereby to affect their perceptions of what they can and cannot do. Moreover, the diversity of perspectives on the way the world is and the way it could be for any given individual is qualitatively increased. (2006, p. 9)

He continues :

The various formats of the networked public sphere provide anyone with an outlet to speak, to inquire, to investigate, without need to access the resources of a major media organization. We are seeing the emergence of new, decentralized approaches to fulfilling the watchdog function and to engaging in political debate and organization.' (Ibid., p. 11)

It also gives rise to a new kind of economy of social value transactions and common-based sharing which is not based solely on monetary and commercial values or traditional economic principles:

As the networked information economy develops new ways of producing information, whose outputs are not treated as proprietary and exclusive but can be made available freely to everyone, it offers modest but meaningful opportunities for improving human development everywhere. We are seeing early signs of the emergence of an innovation ecosystem made of public funding, traditional nonprofits, and the newly emerging sector of peer production that is making it possible to advance human development through cooperative efforts in both rich countries and poor. (Ibid., pp. 14-15)

Benkler concentrates his focus on the democratic potential of P2P production and the social values and contexts that may follow. However, he notes that this utopia is a possibility, something that may emerge, and also that the media powers that be will resist such an eventuality (ibid., p. 22). But rather than seeing a re-consolidation of

traditional media players, Benkler anticipates a re-aggregation around portals, websites and hubs of similar content that accommodate the specific interests of communities.

It is interesting in the context of this thesis to note that much research has centred around the users and uses of content online, and less on how the traditional proprietors or broadcasters have positioned themselves in this new mediascape. Like Benkler, broadcasters, too, are discovering the value of 'free' social content creation. And increasingly they are monetising the new and different social and commercial value paradigms online as well and incorporating them into their commissioning, funding and programming priorities. Replicating social activity online, precisely in accordance with Benkler's thinking, but to completely the opposite effect, broadcasters are rearranging their content around sites in order to orchestrate the movements of users between platforms. These tendencies as well as Benkler's theories will be dealt with in greater detail in the articles Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing and Channels as Content Curators.

Participatory culture as business plan

Focussing on the cultural aspects and commercial potential of YouTube, Burgess and Green argue that activity on YouTube is a business model that both benefits and disrupts established (media) industries and producers, as well as being a space for cultural co-creation. They write:

The discomfort of both corporate interests and community participants points to the uncertainty associated with the meanings and uses of YouTube. This uncertainty can also be interpreted as the source of YouTube's cultural 'generativity' (Zittrain, 2008), which emerges from its multiple roles as high-volume website, a broadcast platform, a media archive, and a social network. YouTube's value is not produced solely or even predominantly by the top-down activities of YouTube Inc as a company. Rather, various forms of cultural, social, and economic values are collectively produced by users *en masse*, via their consumption, evaluations and entrepreneurial activities. Consumer co-creation [...] is fundamental to YouTube's value proposition as well as to its disruptive influence on established media business models. When we think of it this way, we can begin to think about how YouTube matters in terms of culture. For YouTube, participation culture is not a gimmick or a sideshow; it is absolutely core business. (2009, pp. 5-6)

Taking Burgess and Green as read, participatory culture *is* business. In addition to being a cultural activity, participatory culture can also be used as a way to orchestrate users' movements and generate value from their activities across platforms.

From a different vantage point and reflecting on the role of the producer, i.e. the user who also produces, Axel Bruns also examines how to generate value from collaborative activities online, 'the hive'. Differentiating between harvesting, harnessing and hijacking the hive, Bruns outlines different ways of sharing or exploiting value online, bringing to the fore the fact that online it is not always the one who generates the value who profits from it (2007). Looking at this from the perspective of the industry, Caldwell makes a similar but more sinister point. Focussing on the work practices of freelancers in the American film and TV industries in a multiplatform environment, Caldwell collapses the differentiation between WGC (worker generated content), PGC (producer generated content) and UGC (user generated content) and explores how producers and industry workers replicate and take part in the activities of fans, users and audiences in order to generate a buzz and thus advertise and hype their media products online. This marketing strategy predates digitisation as Caldwell notes, but has intensified with the advent of Web 2.0 tools and online culture (2011). Moreover, in *Critical Industrial Practice: Branding, Repurposing, and the Migratory Patterns of Industrial Texts* (2006), Caldwell argues that the meta-narratives and hype around the media industry and its texts permeate the media ecology to the extent that it blurs the traditional stratification between the texts. Previously there were hierarchal demarcations between the primary text, (the film or TV show), the secondary (for example, interviews with production staff or coverage in other media like reviews in press and listings in cinemas) and tertiary texts (the advertising surrounding the primary media text). However, in today's media world the primary text cannot be seen in isolation but is a part of the whole bundle of text, meta-texts and meta-narratives. In the final conclusion, Caldwell argues, it quite simply becomes irrelevant to distinguish, not only between primary, secondary and tertiary texts, but production and promotion (2006). Unlike Caldwell in his 2006 book, this thesis rests on the assumption that there *is* a discernable and relevant difference between levels of texts and that erasing the differences between these is taking an argument to unnecessary extremes. However, concurring with him on certain points, it is the case that this hyping and mythologizing around texts and industry has intensified, and that this has implications for the media industry, its practices and practitioners in a variety of ways and on a number of levels. I shall return to Caldwell's theories in greater detail in many of the following articles, as well as to his methods in the methodology section of this thesis. For now, it is sufficient to say that Caldwell argues that this ingrained and habitual hyping of both self and Hollywood is not only self-promotion and aggrandisement on the part of industry workers, but also serves a greater economic purpose. In *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*, he writes:

Resilient industry habits involving collective, critical self-representation, the recent explosive growth and popularity of self-referencing, self-disclosure and organisational transparency has been stimulated by at least four general factors: by wide-ranging breakdown of traditional barriers between media professionals and audiences, by new digital technologies and blurred borders that once distinguished lay and professional media worlds; by increasing dense clutter of

multimedia markets which require self-referencing meta-texts for effective viewer navigation, and by increased competition and task uncertainty which triggers pressures to symbolic value craft distinction and innovation in public ways. These tendencies can be mapped in a wide continuum [...] from industrialized corporate reflexivity to inter-personalised worker reflectivity. (2008, p. 323)

He continues: '[s]uch tactics enforce what I now consider the über-fantasy and goal of Hollywood: to acquire content for as little or no costs and to get everyone to work for free [...] In essence, the industry uses aesthetic and cultural capital to short-change workers.' (2008, p. 324 & 331) These developments stem from a number of socio-economic factors and are reflected on all levels of the production chain, and on a strategic level as well.

Second shift aesthetics

Participatory culture as a business venture does not only apply to YouTube alone as indicated above. As the broadcasters move online and the users move back and forth between TV, mobile and online content, new scheduling, commissioning and programming strategies are put in place. In his *Second-shift Media Aesthetics: Programming, Interactivity and User Flows*, Caldwell calls these new ways of orchestrating and herding user practices around digitally dispersed texts and non-linear content consumption 'second shift aesthetics'. Caldwell refers to Raymond Williams' flow theory, which looks beyond the individual programme and focuses on programme blocks, Nick Browns' 'supertext', i.e. the texts that surround the programme, such as ads, flagging, branding and programme idents, as well as the pre-digital and linear scheduling strategies of, for example, counter programming, hammocking and tent-poling as 'first shift aesthetics'. Seeing these flow/supertext methodologies as sociological tools that enabled critics to 'discover' scheduling strategies that broadcast and network programming departments had mastered and deployed for decades, Caldwell argues that digital aesthetics are 'second shift' in that they disrupt first shift programming strategies that tried to tie viewers into a linear, sequential viewing pattern. Non-linear and digital television ruin the fundamental institutional logic of TV because schedulers can no longer strategise and organise flows around sequential viewing patterns. Thus second shift aesthetics are designed to 'bring new forms of rationality to unstable media economies' (2003, p. 135). He writes: 'programming practices in what I have termed the convergence industry's second shift are being rationalised around new forms of textual dispersal, reaggregating flows and temporal seriality.' (2003, pp. 142-143) Caldwell gives HBO's 'tiers' (cable packets) , like HBO Zone, HBO Family, HBO Signature, as examples of strategies that group consumers around content and attempt to impose intrabrand flow strategies across channels and niches within the media conglomerate.

Combining Caldwell's early work on digital television and second shift aesthetics with his more recent work on the creation of content in the production ecology and the ways in which media conglomerations use self-mythologising and hype around their brands to exploit the work of producers, staff and audiences to their own economic ends (2011, p. 302), Caldwell's points take on more a wide ranging dimension. Second shift aesthetics can be seen not only as ways of leading audiences from platform to platform while retaining and maintaining their interest as well as creating brand loyalty, but also as a way of monetising non-proprietary content as well as to use social networks and the activities of the users on these to create content and advertising for free.

Second shift aesthetics in action - Transmedia storytelling, 360, verticals and two-screen programming

Thinking about the current scheduling, commissioning and production practices of the broadcasters in the UK, for example, the BBC's practice of 'bundled projects', '360 programming' and Channel 4's creation of 'verticals' of similar content designed to glue the user to a certain type of content like a fly to flypaper, are good examples of second shift aesthetics. As discussed in the previous pages, the public service broadcasters' digital strategies and activities are part of their public service remits and are thus politically defined and required. However, these strategies are also ways of replicating the activities of communities and participatory culture in order to monetise and profit from the social values generated online.

This is of course no news to Henry Jenkins, who famously wrote:

Welcome to the world of convergence culture, where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways [...] In the world of media convergence, every important story gets told, every brand gets sold, and every consumer courted across multiple media platforms.' (2006, pp. 2-3)

Jenkins' *Convergence Culture* is a study of what convergence – and divergence – has to offer in terms of organising fan communities and marketing brands across platforms. Focussing as much on case studies of the bottom-up activities of fan communities as on the top-down marketing of high-spec media brands like *Star Wars*, *The Matrix* and *American Idol*, its focus is very much on how to get in touch with, harness and monetise the power and activities of fandom and communities through transmedia. Although now criticised for being too

technologically enthusiastic, consumer materialistic and for transferring marketing methods onto democratic processes, it is often forgotten that Jenkins was exploring convergence in considered ways, outlining possibilities, not only facts. *Convergence Culture* in many ways became the milestone publication that placed convergence and participatory culture within academic debate by offering ways to think about practices around and across new platforms that are now taken for granted. Jenkins had of course been writing about convergence and fan culture online for many years, indeed one of his main points is that convergence culture, participatory culture, culture jamming and the sharing of audiovisual material is not a new phenomenon in itself, but an online continuation and intensification of practices, activities and networks of fan communities and folk culture. On Tribeca's film blog *The Future of Film*, Henry Jenkins revisits and refines his earlier descriptions of 'transmedia #202' anno 2011 as:

Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story. (Ford, Green, & Jenkins, 2011)

Jenkins warns against seeing transmedia as simply cloning content across platforms. It is not just remediation but also a synergy between platforms. In addition, it is as much a storytelling method as it is a branding and franchising device (for a more detailed discussion of transmedia and 360 programming, please see the section on definitions and terminology in the appendix to this thesis). This definition of transmedia has inspired academics and practitioners alike. Matt Locke, Channel 4's former Head of Crossplatform, for example, uses it to describe the channel's programming strategies and his commissioning priorities (interview with author. Transcription in appendix III).

'360' programming is the practical application of Jenkins' transmedia storytelling for TV programmes, programming and brands. A term coined by the BBC, '360' programming or commissioning (the suffix depends on the stage of the production process) is when a programme brand or strand appears in various forms across platforms and incorporates a multiplicity of media (TV, text, sound) simultaneously. The content and platforms feed into each other and drive content consumers from the TV programme to websites, games, phone apps and back. Ideally, and often, '360' programming allows the content consumer to discover new aspects of the programme and/or engage and interact with content in different ways on each platform. '360' can thus be seen as a strategy of creating differentiated programme content related to the same programme brand, orchestrating and co-ordinating this across platforms. The idea here is not only to offer a richer audiovisual experience by adding value to the programme, but also to generate programme loyalty and accumulate and retain consumers

of content in the process. Before the '360' approach, between 2001 and 2006, the BBC pursued a production strategy of 'bundled projects' as the corporation attempted to reposition itself as a multiplatform public service provider. This strategy meant that content and other programmes were 'bundled' around flagship programmes, as already described, and signalled a move to seeing and marketing 'projects' rather than programmes. It also led to the introduction of the '360' approach to integrated production and commissioning in March 2005 under the 'Creative Futures strategy' (Strange, 2011, p. 136). Channel 4's strategy of commissioning around verticals performs exactly the same function.

Recently, the commission and production of 'two-screen programming' further enhances the broadcasters' ability to drive users between platforms. Two-screen programming allows users to watch one programme on TV or online, whilst accessing and interacting with a matching and complementary programme app on an additional screen (mobile, laptop, iPad). This allows audiences to access additional content and to interact with the programme on the second screen as they watch it on the first screen. For example, in the inventors' game show *Dragons Den* where prospective inventors pitch their projects to four 'dragons' or angel investors, users can play along and bid on their favourite inventions as well as access further information about the inventions. Two-screen programming not only allows users to interact with content, feedback and play along, it also creates content that can be used by producers in future programmes both in terms of actual user generated video content and in the form of market research into the interests of the audience. In documentary and factual programming this practice is also incorporated into new projects, as Maverick Television's Head of Development Paul Woolf explains:

[...]the idea that people will interact through the same screen they're watching a film on, has taken second place to the idea that people will watch a second screen and will use a second screen at the same time as watching TV. It's about the growth of second screen viewing so people watching TV and having their laptops open on their lap as they watch and using Facebook or Twitter, or emailing their friends or just doing something completely separate from whatever they're watching. But that being the reality of how people prefer to interact with what they're watching, rather than them having things on the same screen and influencing the programme or doing other things that are kind of converged if you like. A second screen way of viewing seems to be becoming the dominant one. And I think what that means is that interactive documentaries aren't what people want. What they want is to be able to watch a really good documentary and then do something with it their socially networked online world, either during or after watching it. What they don't necessarily want is sort of to be given the choice of which thing they watch next while they're watching on TV. It's a shift from thinking of documentaries as artefact that you interact with to thinking of documentaries as artefacts around which you do things. (Author's interview with Paul Woolf, Maverick Television.)

Two-screen programming is also a way of connecting and binding users to online and offline content as I will analyse in relation to Channel 4's verticals in the article Channels as Content Curators.

Participatory culture as business plan

Viewing the theories of transmedia and second shift aesthetics in the light of current and emerging production practices, it can be argued that on a commissioning and production level, '360' programming, transmedia storytelling, 'bundling' content or centring it around verticals, as well as emerging practices like two-screen programming are not just ways of directing and honing user behaviour in consuming media content on a scheduling level, they are also strategies that make users generate content or advertising for free – content that is then incorporated into programmes without remuneration or credit. In addition to generating economic and social values outside of the proprietary system of the established media organisations, as dreamt of by Benkler and Bruns, media corporations have found ways to rationalise internet and social networking behaviour and activities. I will return to this in greater detail in the article Channels as Content Curators.

Following the money to look at content production from a marketing or economic perspective makes one reconsider and nuance some of the current debate surrounding user generated content versus 'professionally' created content, as well as its users and producers. Some academics, such as Axel Bruns (2007), believe that user generated content will take over from television in providing audiovisual content while Benkler sees the potential of the emergence of a new, non-proprietary economy outside the traditional media owners (2006). Others, such as Graeme Turner and John Ellis, argue that producing is for and best left to media professionals. While there is no doubt that, as Ellis points out, there is still a difference between the production values, intentions and purposes of most professionally produced content and user generated content, this dichotomy between users and professional producers seems increasingly hard to uphold. Crowdsourced news and content constitute the bulk of the content of current.tv, although increasingly this is being produced and editorialised by the editors of the channel (author's interview with Lina Prestwood, current.tv). On an industrial scale, it is hard not to see that the entry level initiatives and competitions that allow TV companies with 'new talent' to pitch ideas to broadcasters in order to give recent film school graduate or anyone with a good idea a chance to work on a TV programme and get their first (or second or third) industry credit, are little more than pretexts for getting cheap labour from entry level newbies to produce professional content. Similarly, 'two-screen programming' enables users to interact with content, feedback and play along, it also creates content to be used by producers in future programmes as mentioned previously and in the form of research into the interests of the audience. In

accordance with Caldwell's blurring of professional job boundaries and the role of the (prod)users described above, there is a continuum of activity in which both long established professionals and newbies take part. Increasingly, the relationship between producer, film and user enters into a dynamic relationship that affects programming, scheduling, platforms and content.

Documentary on multiple platforms

Jeanette Steemers reminds us that, according to Nicholas Negroponte, the best way of looking at digital television is not to view it as television at all. Also, writing a decade after Negroponte, she reminds us that the reality of digital television might well be a good deal more mundane than the utopian discourses that accompanied its inception (2004). In *Television as Digital Media*, James Bennett separates television from its traditional locus and platform by stating that television as digital media is a non-site-specific, cultural and technological hybrid form that spreads across multiple platforms (2011). Applying this same approach to digital documentary, this thesis sees documentary not only as televisual or cinematic, but also as a genre that takes on a variety of forms and moves across platforms, portals and AV players¹³. As described earlier in this chapter, there is as much 'new' as there are continuations of old practices and conventions in the ways documentary films are funded, produced, and distributed today. Traditional forms of documentary, for example the 30' or 90' documentary co-exists with new forms and practices. I shall return to some of these new forms in the final part of this thesis, and specifically in the article *Documentary at Play*. Documentary films are still viewed on TV in real time by audiences sitting on their sofas, but they are also viewed on iPads, laptops and phones, downloaded months or even years after their original release and transmission and interacted with through two-screen programming. They are produced by blue chip movie outfits with matching production values, as illustrated by *Touching the Void* (Macdonald, 2003, UK) and *Man on Wire* (Marsh, 2008, UK); by traditional TV companies, as the output of the BBC's natural history unit in Bristol, for example *Blue Planet* (BBC, 2001, UK), *Life* (BBC, 2009, UK) and *Earth Flight* (BBC, 2012, UK), attests; or shot from the hip by a bunch of VJ's with mobile cameras and a portable satellite dish, as *Burma VJ* (Østergård, 2008, Denmark) or the mini-documentaries from Homs broadcast on Channel 4 News on the 27th of March 2012 show. Most British documentaries – 79% – are still funded by traditional broadcasters in much the same way as they used to be, but they are also crowdfunded, crewfunded, pay-if-you-want and P2P distributed.

¹³ In exploring documentary in a multiplatform context, the definition of documentary has necessarily needed not to be media specific. In this thesis 'television' and 'cinematic' documentaries are therefore different documentary forms under the umbrella of the documentary genre.

Multiplatform documentary content, its users and uses

Carl Plantinga opens his 1996 *Rhetoric and Representation in Non-Fiction Film* with 'Moving picture nonfictions, typically called documentaries or non-fiction films and television, are a diverse lot.' (1997, p. 1) This same description applies to the documentary films described in this thesis. The documentaries analysed here place themselves on a continuum. At one end of the spectrum, there is the traditional feature or TV documentary designed simply to be watched in the cinema or on TV. At the other end, there is the interactive documentary film that demands the engagement and interaction of its users, either in its making, consumption or distribution. Traditional TV and feature documentaries still abound and at this point in time, most multiplatform documentaries replicate these forms, for example the crowdsourced *Life in a Day* (Macdonald, 2011, US) is essentially a cinematic feature and observational documentary. Even new documentary forms or hybrids can also be understood within the definitions and genre categories already in existence, as defined by Plantinga and Bondebjerg.

That said, digitisation *has* subtly changed the relationship between viewer and film, as well as documentary's form on the multiple platforms it moves across. Dan Jones, Head of Interactive of the TV and multiplatform independent production company, Maverick TV, describes the relationship between documentary, its audiences and the platforms that surround it today in this way:

It's interesting to look back on what a traditional one-off documentary is. It's still much the same. But, it doesn't exist in a vacuum as much as it might have done in the past. As soon as it becomes available there is an immediate community around it, whether it's one you've actually created or just one that happens naturally on Twitter, people talking about it on Facebook or in comments on YouTube. (Interview with author)

Documentary today can no longer be seen in isolation.

Documentary viewers, viewersers¹⁴, users, producers, prosumers, players, receivers, gamers and audiences

Attending my first Sheffield International Documentary festival in 1998, and first Edinburgh International Television Festival in 2000, I was taken aback by the number of directors who professed neither to care about the reception or audience of their films nor whether anyone actually watched them. In an online world, such a

¹⁴ Dan Harris (2002) as quoted in James Bennett (2008, p. 279) describes the dialectic function of viewers and users as viewersers.

mindset would be churlish, if not foolish. Even the traditional documentary cannot be seen outside of its context, as Dan Jones points out. In recent years, online documentaries as well as interactive documentaries, the so-called idocs, have begun to receive critical attention. The first idoc conference dedicated to this documentary form, was held in Bristol in March 2010 and is planned to be an annual event. A special issue of *Studies in Documentary Films* about interactive docs is due to be published in 2012. Similarly, most documentary festivals now have panels on interactive docs, and Bret Gaylor, the director of one of the first examples of this genre, *RIP! A Remix Manifesto* (2008, Canada) was a speaker at UK's largest documentary festival in Sheffield 2009. Platforms like YouTube, Vimeo and Dailymotion are widely used precisely because they are user friendly and allow their users to easily share their audiovisual content (Burgess & Green, 2009). What differentiates documentaries online from the television or feature documentary on 'traditional' platforms like TV and the cinema, is precisely that documentaries online have the potential to engage with and integrate the notion and reality of their users. Therefore, when exploring documentary in a multiplatform context, it is fruitful to address the function and role of the audience or, to quote interactive producer Anthony Lilley, 'the people formerly know as the audience' (2006).

As explored in the previous pages, the users and audiences of documentary films play various roles and perform a diversity of actions in today's mediascape, and therefore also in the articles of this dissertation. Whereas the role of the users is not the central focus of this dissertation *per se*, they are extremely important because they take a more active role in the consumption and production process of documentary films than they did and could do before the internet. Even at the simplest level, for example 'snacking' on 24 hours news channels or streams of linear, live TV whilst working on the computer; streaming a rental film or watching a documentary time-shifted on VOD on broadband-enabled television, the user is asserting more control over the consumption of factual and documentary content that she or he has hitherto been able to do.

The article format employed here means that I have used various terms for those at the receiving (although often reciprocating) end of the tripartite structure of many communication models: senders, messages and recipients¹⁵. The variety of subjects covered in this dissertation means that there can be no unified term that describes this group of people and their various activities. In all the articles, the users or audiences occupy various roles. In the article *Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing*, they enter the industry as producers in their own right by producing, raising finance and distributing their own films online in order to compete with the established media players. In the article *Channels as Content Curators*, users' pursuit of content is what motivates broadcasters to become

¹⁵ Please see footnote 4.

public service media providers, in order to guide users to their content through herding them from platform to platform. In the article *Newsjacking the Media: Video Ambushing and AV Astroturfing*, users and their productions offer counter-discourses to or do battle with broadcasters. In the final article, convergent genres, technology and disciplines enable users to engage with representations of facts and reality in new hybrid forms of documentary by playing docu-games or deciding the structure of the narrative in interactive database documentaries. Thus, depending on the subject of each article, the term for this group of recipients will be what is appropriate to describe their behaviour in the context and subject matter of the specific article. However, generally and as a guide term, I will use the term 'users', as this seems to embrace most of the spectrum of activity described in this thesis.

Multiplatform and interactive documentaries

Galloway, McAlpine and Harris define interactive documentary 'as any documentary that uses interactivity as a core part of its delivery mechanism' (D. Galloway, McAlpine, & Harris, 2007, p. 330), and then refine this definition into four types of interactivity based on the degree and type of involvement users can have with the documentary material: Passive Adaptive (eyetracking software), Active Adaptive (docu-games), Immersive (ARGs) and Expansive (MMOGs). Interactivity, in Galloway, McAlpine and Harris' opinion, undermines and challenges the complete editorial control the *auteur* previously enjoyed. This thesis would like to expand on this definition so that it incorporates not only the user, but also the film-maker, film and the context the film emerges in. Taking a production studies view of the role of the film-maker, the assumption here is that the *auteur* rarely or never enjoyed such powers as they were accredited with in the first place, but that a film is always the combined achievement of an entire production team and a result of the socio-economic conditions in which the film is produced (Lotz & Newcomb, 2012). Furthermore, following the documentary theorists who see documentary as based on a cognitive contract and context, this thesis would like to place interactive documentary in a wider context that incorporates users and film-makers as well as the socio-economic environment in which it emerges. Finally, focussing on users or viewers ignores the presence, production process and practices behind the '360' documentaries and commissions that drive users and content consumers from platform to platform, and in the process allows them to access more content or interact with the narrative in different ways depending on the platform they are on. Thus, I prefer to add the term 'multiplatform' documentary to Galloway, McAlpine and Harris's definition of 'interactive documentary' in order allow for all kinds of interactivity. The definition of a multiplatform and interactive documentary in this thesis therefore includes also its production, distribution methods, as well as the film's relationship to the industry that surrounds it. Thus, in this thesis, multiplatform documentary films or content are those that use interactivity in their production, delivery and/or distribution methods.

In order to distinguish between types of multiplatform documentaries, taking into account the context in which they emerge, this thesis distinguishes between intrinsically and extrinsically interactive documentaries:

1. Documentaries that are *intrinsically* multiplatform and interactive in their content and storyline. Collaborative documentaries, database documentaries, docu-games and remix documentaries fall within this category.
2. Documentaries that are *extrinsically* multiplatform in that they are funded, distributed or promoted across platforms. In this category one finds documentaries that are commissioned as '360' commissions, the content of which is altered by its producers as it migrates across platforms. Documentaries that are funded or distributed online, viral videos as marketing, astroturfing or advertising are also in this category.

Intrinsically interactive documentaries allow users to interact with the documentary content as, or before, the narrative unfolds. Database documentaries allow non-linear documentary storytelling by enabling the viewer to choose his or her own path through the database material based on parameters, such as date, character, location or issues. Examples of this are *Prison Valley* (Brault & Dufresne, 2010, France), *Gaza/Sderot* (Gordey, Elmaliyah & al Muzayyen, 2008, France/Israel) and *Model Agency* (Maverick TV, 2010, UK). In docu-games the gamer is able to interact with the content of the documentary, and in doing so change its storyline and outcome as he or she goes along. Similarly, in the documentary series *Seven Days* (Channel 4, 2010, UK), the two-screen apps and interface, Chatnav enabled users to comment on and thus influence the behaviour of the contributors live on air. Because the Chatnav function took the place of viewers voting contributors off the show, *Seven Days* was advertised as the next *Big Brother* (*Seven Days* did not, however, attract a similar audience and has not (yet) been recommissioned). Tools like HTML 5 and WebGL that update environments as the database changes, have the potential to create continually self-updating, immersive documentary experiences, although these new technologies have yet to be explored in a documentary film. Other types of intrinsically interactive and collaborative documentaries allow users to mod, change, rip or simply add footage to the overall film's content and in this way contribute to its production. *RIP! A Remix Manifesto* (Gaylor, 2008, Canada), an early interactive documentary, invited people and producers to upload and remix their own, the director's and other users' material online. This user generated material was then incorporated into a documentary about remix culture that toured the festival scene in 2009 and is now available for download. In Ridley Scott and Kevin Macdonald's *Life in a Day* (2011, US), people across the world were asked to upload their own footage of a

specific day in July 2009, which was then turned into a mosaic of lived life experiences across the globe, from Mongolia to Massachusetts and Tokyo to Tyndrum.

These intrinsically interactive documentaries are still very much under the editorial direction of their respective directors and production teams. Although the collaborative aspect is, no doubt, important for activating and generating a community around a film and its cause, it can be argued that there is little aesthetic, editorial and practical difference between incorporating footage uploaded from contributors across the world and, say, using archive material or second unit footage. Thus, what is 'new' about online and interactive docs is the way they include and interact with the audience in the production and creation process. However, that said, it is important to dispel or modify the myth of the interactive documentary producer who can freely participate and co-create. Rather than being interactive producers and co-creators, the users are placed in predefined and predetermined sets of modes and patterns of participation and interaction that are very much managed and orchestrated by the makers of the film. The film-makers are still the ones directing, producing, editing and assembling interactive documentaries using the viewers' footage, and the structure of database documentaries has a varied but limited set of paths the viewer can explore. The director/producer/production team is therefore still very much in control of the users' experiences.

This is also the case in docu-games where what Ian Bogost calls 'the procedural rhetorics' (i.e. the underlying structure and design of the game), set the boundaries for the gamer's interaction with the game's content (Bogost, 2007). Specifically discussing documentary games Cynthia Poremba notes:

While this might seem a denial of authorial control along the lines of the traditional observational documentary, the selection of material to integrate into the documentary is itself an authorial act, or sometimes a curatorial act (in the still-rare case of user added content). (2011, p. 9)

It is especially interesting to explore docu-games as an example of a multiplatform, intrinsically interactive form. In docu-games the level of user engagement is the most intense and heightened of these intrinsically interactive forms: a gamer plays a game and in this process interacts with the narrative and content on screen. Precisely this engagement has led the majority of scholars of docu-games to dismiss this form as being unable to refer to reality, or at best only to be able to refer to reality on a subjective level. However, as will be demonstrated in the article *Documentary at Play*, focussing on the interaction of the gamer ignores the complexities of the communicative function that takes place in games and the context that they place themselves in. Rather, and viewing docu-games from the perspective of cognitive documentary theory, it is the contractual relationship between gamer, game and game design that establish the reference to reality.

This level of control over the possible interactions for the user is mirrored on an institutional level and this can be seen in extrinsically interactive documentaries. Whilst the aim of producing interactive documentaries is the stated ambition and, in many cases, mission statement of broadcasters and film funding bodies and financiers, these same commissioning and funding structures make it hard if not impossible to produce truly interactive films. According to Niki Strange, the delivery methods of traditional broadcasters are all but incompatible with co-creation and production (2011, p. 135). Instead, '360' commissions are used to drive traffic between platforms in order to build communities around programme brands with the intention of maintaining and sustaining interest between programmes and series and, though this, create brand loyalty. This is noted both by academics like John T. Caldwell (2003) and practitioners in the TV industry, like for example Director of PACT John McVay and Stuart Cosgrove from Channel 4 (interviews with author). This is also the topic of the second article of this thesis, Channels as Content Curators.

Outside of the traditional broadcasters and funding bodies, documentary films and content are funded and distributed online. Extrinsically interactive documentaries include campaigning documentaries or films that challenge dominant discourse, as well as viral videos, advertorials, and attempts to speak back at broadcasters. This is the topic of the articles Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing as well as Newsjacking the Media: Video Ambushing and AV Astrourfing.

Digital documentary aesthetics

The new digital context as well as these more complex modes of interacting with content are not the only distinguishing feature of documentary today. There has also been a cross-fertilisation and merging between TV, cinema, mobile and web aesthetics and graphics within documentary (Birchall, 2009). New aesthetic expressions emerge and merge every time new equipment or recording formats are introduced. The look of these new forms and formats, and the new situations and locations these sometimes give access to, becomes part of the mainstream aesthetics and modes of expression of documentary film and other genres. For example, when Super 16 entered the consumer market in the 1960s, the saturation of the film stock of these cameras became shorthand for home or amateur video; the introduction of the three-chip digital broadcast quality cameras like the PD150 affected the look of observational and current affairs documentaries in the 1990s; and the high definition cameras of the 2000s sparked off a new wave of feature documentaries, most famously the Oscar-winning *Touching the Void* (Macdonald, 2003, UK).

In addition, micro-technology has allowed documentaries and news programmes to reveal areas of life that were previously inaccessible. Footage shot on soldiers' mobile phone cameras has given worldwide audiences access to scenes and areas of war in places where journalists cannot usually go. Pixelated and low resolution footage has become everyday fare in news reports and thus an acceptable technical standard for viewers and broadcasters alike, as well as an aesthetic on TV. Indeed, John Ellis argues that digital images have increased the practical and ethical sophistication and knowledge of viewers both in terms of producing and circulating digital images themselves, but also in assessing their quality and ethical justifications as evidence, making audiences more sceptical of factual footage (2010). In any case, mobile footage of human rights violations has been the basis and *raison d'être* for investigative documentaries. Footage of the aftermath of the bombing of a family compound and resultant killing of civilians in the village of Azizabad in Afghanistan in 2009 became the basis of a investigative documentary on Channel 4's documentary strand *Dispatches*. The bombing was the result of an anti-insurgent military operation by American troops, who, until this footage emerged, had described it as a success without civilian casualties (*Afghanistan's Dirty War*, Channel 4, UK, 2011). Similarly, mobile phone footage of extra-judicial executions of Tamil Tigers and civilian casualties, who had been used as human shields or raped, was the key evidence and basis for a Channel 4 *Dispatches* documentary about atrocities committed by both sides of the recent conflict in Sri Lanka (*Sri Lanka's Killing Fields*, Channel 4, UK, 2011). At the other end of the spectrum, HD in combination with extra slow motion, micro and remote controlled cameras have breathed new life into documentaries, especially nature and wildlife series, by enabling cameras to show events that are otherwise impossible to capture by the human eye, as illustrated by documentary series like *Blue Planet* (2001), *Frozen Planet* (2011), *Life* (2011) and *Earthflight* (2012), made by the BBC's natural history department in Bristol.

Similarly, online and offline content cross-fertilise and borrow from each other stylistically and aesthetically. Audiovisual user generated content on sites like YouTube or Vimeo often draws on traditional documentary aesthetics, conventions and methods of representation, and, for instance, Michael Renov points to the similarities between first-person documentary films and vlogs, YouTube's webcam confessionals and the personal web page (2009). Conversely, the aesthetics of the web are affecting how documentaries and TV programmes look. The feature documentary *Catfish* (Joost & Schulman, 2010, US), uses the pixelated and shaky footage of handheld cameras and webcams as well as the interface of Facebook to explore notions of identity, scams and stalking online.

However, although the aesthetics of documentaries today are fascinating to explore, it is not the main topic of this thesis.

New forms and expressions, old genres

The multiplatform world has brought about new aesthetic expressions and increased interactivity in and around documentary films, as can be seen in the above examples of database documentaries, collaborative interactive documentaries, or in the plethora of UGC online. This has led some documentary scholars to argue that the internet brings about new genres of documentary films or that the definitions of documentary films need to be modified or widened. For example, Danny Birchall identifies four new online documentary 'genres' that draw on web aesthetic: conspiracy and collaboration films; community and campaigning documentaries, 'Dirty Reality' and 'Other People's Lives.' He argues that although online documentary content relies on the conventions and aesthetics of the internet in terms of brevity, serialisation, direct address to a specific community and low production values, the immediacy of this online content cannot be mistaken for lack of mediation. Instead these forms 'are as deliberately constructed as any existing documentary forms, if not more, because of technical constraints' (2009, pp. 282-283). Birchall's research points to the fact that there is an important distinction to be made between the established longer forms and formats of traditional TV and feature documentary film, and new, shorter documentary fragments or documents on sites like YouTube. These begin life as media specific forms and are described in these terms, however increasingly they cease to be so. YouTube already streams long-form content and Google is beginning to commission content in 'traditional' formats (Schmidt, 2011) and forms as described in the previous pages. Channel 4 and BBC have long experimented with shorter formats, for example on the BBC Three site and the BBC will increasingly do so according to Head of Interactive and IPTV Victoria Jaye¹⁶. Also, it seem clear from Birchall's cases that rather than creating new documentary genres, online documentary content mirrors the existing, traditional documentary subgenres – that is the authoritative, the poetic-reflexive, the observational and the dramatised documentary.

This is especially the case when viewing these 'new' forms from the perspective of documentary theory. The existing body of theory and research into TV and the cinematic feature documentary film is well placed to account for and accommodate new hybrid or shorter forms of documentary content that appear online. As already mentioned, the conventions, aesthetics and subgenres of documentary films are well described and categorised by, amongst others, Bill Nichols (1991) and John Corner (1995, 1996), Carl Plantinga (1997), Ib Bondebjerg (Bondebjerg, 2002, 2008, forthcoming 2013). Especially Ib Bondebjerg's definition and genre

¹⁶ Victoria Jaye was speaking at a creative breakfast event hosted by TRC Media in Glasgow, November 8th 2012.

breakdown inform this paper's understanding of the documentary form. Following on from Plantinga, Bondebjerg operates with four main genres of the TV documentary: the authoritative, investigative and journalistic documentary; the observational documentary; the poetic-reflexive; and the dramatised documentary. These categories are also very useful in an online context because they accommodate for much of what is perceived as 'new genres' of online documentary films. To illustrate, Birchall's 'dirty reality' footage almost never stands alone, but is often incorporated as evidence into a journalistic, investigative documentary, as it was the case with the found 'dirty reality' mobile footage which was the documentation of atrocities of Channel 4's *Afghanistan's Dirty War* (2009). 'Other People's Lives' fits into a long tradition of observational films or autobiographical films as Michael Renov points out (2009). Moreover, polemic, community or campaigning films are part of documentary tradition and convention and can either be understood as authoritative or reflective-poetic films depending on the position of the narrator and his/her audiences, or as subgenres in themselves according to Patricia Aufderheide's definitions (2007). Similarly, many database documentaries are in their essence observational documentaries and although the footage is sourced from a variety of contributors in crowdsourced documentaries, most collaborative documentary projects still have strong directorial input and effectively belong to the observational or authoritative subgenres. Thus the definitions of documentary presented by and subgenres described by, amongst others, Bondebjerg and Plantinga still stand, and can be used to unpack and understand the communicative functions and workings of these new documentary forms that appear online.

Knowledge mediated through games and alternative reality games (ARGs)

New platforms and technologies have influenced the form, aesthetics and expression of documentary films, as have other types of media, such as computer games. Whether the alternate reality and identity game *Second Life* is in fact populated by people who never log off or is a pioneering, revolutionary space for exploring alternate realities, communities and identity as an avatar, there is no doubt that online multiplayer worlds like *The Sims* online and *World of Warcraft* attract huge numbers of players. As well as organising themselves into communities and teams, MMOGs (massive multiplayer online games) also afford players the possibility to collaboratively produce and share audiovisual narratives individually in the growing field of machinima (Frølund, 2012; Thorhauge, 2010). These MMOGs also offer players unprecedented possibilities to take part in and create narratives through interaction with an online community, playing either as themselves or as avatars. Thus, players mix their personal reality and identity with fictitious online worlds. In line with this, much development is currently going into ARGs as learning spaces and games as educational tools, in museums, schools and on life-long learning sites online. Thus, games as disseminators of knowledge are being acknowledged and accepted

by mainstream cultural and educational institutions and organisations, and this is reflected by the acclaim and awards ARGs like Channel 4 Education's *Smokescreen* (www.smokescreen.org), an online game highlighting the perils of social networking sites in the form of a social network site meets whodunnit game, have attracted. As official makers of distinction, *Smokescreen* won the Texan SXSW Award for Best Game, US, and the General Education Multimedia Award at the Open University's Learning on Screen conference in the United Kingdom in 2010. The fourth article of this thesis, *Documentary at Play*, combines documentary theory with games theory to explore in which ways games, and especially the so-called documentary games, can be said to disseminate information and knowledge about the real world.

The democratic potential of digital documentary

Integral to both common sense and critical perception of documentary as a genre is the idea that it has an important democratic function to perform in society. As previously mentioned, Plantinga defines it as a place and space where different values and priorities of society can be debated and, as such, provides a forum for the intersubjective exchanges that are key to the democratic function in society (1997). Discussing documentary in a multiplatform and thus online context, it is therefore pertinent to mention the body of work focussing on the democratic merits – or not – of the web. The early debates about the democratic potential of the internet and convergence oscillated between polar positions of optimism and pessimism. Some saw the internet as an open and free participatory space with the potential to democratise the mediascape; others saw it as dumbing down through mob rule or as simply reinforcing existing hierarchies and media oligopolies, with access ring-fenced by gatekeepers, or as yet another revenue avenue for big business. Today most critics agree that the internet encompasses all these features and that while Web 2.0 has changed the dynamics of the mediascape as we know it, established media organisations are not going to take the onslaught of new online channels stepping on their turf, lying down.

Clay Shirkey has warned about the stultifying effects of group dominance on conversations and open-minded thinking (2003) and Andrew Keen has dismissed the web as promoting nothing but diluted debate, amateurism and heralding the end of meaningful engagement, enlightenment or discussions (2007). Henry Jenkins' *Convergence Culture* and Yukio Benkler's *The Wealth of Networks* were both published in 2006 and, thus, writing at the dawn of the explosion in audiovisual content online, both works enthused about the potential of Web 2.0 in terms of participation both for the individual fan, consumer or producer, as well as for organisations and institutions in business and politics. The core of both works is that Web 2.0 affords the individual

unprecedented power to participate in and influence decisions, in the realms of media, politics and business. Be it through blogs, vlogs, smartmobs or grassroots and activist organisation, Web 2.0 technology offers the individual the ability to have their say in a much wider context and on many more platforms than has previously been possible. However, questions have since been asked, not least by Jenkins and Benkler, about whether the ability to participate and have your say necessarily means that your voice will be heard – or counted. The democratising force of the internet is only valid if what you say is, firstly, heard and, secondly, actually makes a difference or matters. In the cacophony and plethora of participation, it can be as hard to be heard as it is to find those one wants to listen to. On this basis, exploring both the potential and the threats of ‘voice’ in today’s neoliberalist society, Nick Couldry has been compelled to pronounce a ‘crisis of voice’ (2010).

Similarly, the potential for internet activism has come under scrutiny. In an early and pre-social networks example of research into internet activism and based on specific case studies, Graham Meikle sees internet campaigns as new digital methods of activism, but notes that these campaigns’ main mode of communication is email and almost always work best in tandem with traditional media (2002). Recently, Kevin Howley (2009), Ib Bondebjerg (2010) and Christian Christiansen (2009) have written about mobilisation and activist practices centred around the online video of, for example, Brave New films, *Democracy Now* and campaigning crowdsourced and crowd financed documentaries. At the time of writing in the summer of 2012, the democratic potential of audiovisual communication on and through new media platforms is undergoing a revival as the world, and academia, seeks to understand the communicative processes, dispersal of knowledge, mobilisation and organisation that took place throughout the Middle East during the Arab Spring of 2011 and 2012, as well as trying to come to terms with the shocking realisation that information streams and evidence can be silenced and suppressed by simply turning off the power supply, as witnessed – or rather, not witnessed – during the latter stages of the Syrian Army’s attack on the city of Homs in February 2012.

Important as this undoubtedly is, the democratic function of documentary is not the central focus of this dissertation and the theories surrounding these areas of research will therefore not occupy a central position in it.

Note on digital divides

When this thesis refers to ‘audiences’, ‘producers’, or ‘users’ as all-inclusive, general terms, the references serve as a shorthand for ‘people in the UK with broadband access’. This generalisation is purely practical and the implication or intention is in no way to suggest that everyone has the skills, education or physical and

technological ability to take part in life online. There are huge digital divides globally as well in the UK, on geographical, economic, social and educational levels. These divides cause exclusion, new social and educational divisions and are pertinent and important issues to address both in a global and a national context. However, this is not the subject of this dissertation, and I hope that readers will accept the generalisation of the terminology.

Deliberation on theoretical framework

As explored in this chapter, I will predominantly draw on documentary theory, as well as theories surrounding multiplatform television and productions studies throughout this thesis. These theoretical positions will be put into play with network theories, as well as – to a lesser extent – theories of media economics, in order to make the case that although some documentary forms and practices continue in documentary film and its industry in much the same ways as they did in the 1980s and 1990s, the hegemonies and roles of the players and users in the digital mediascape have shifted and this has affected the way documentary films are commissioned, funded, produced, viewed and distributed. Scrutinising the current mediascape in the UK through the optics of these theories, the online strategies of the public service broadcasters in particular must be seen as being as much propelled by policy decisions and remit requirements, as by strategies to optimise audience share, and, in the case of Channel 4, profits. Multiplatform and interactive documentaries must also be seen in this light.

In prioritising this particular set of theories, I have placed less emphasis on other vantage points from which multiplatform documentary films and its industry could also have been explored. For example, Lawrence Lessing's and Daniel Chamberlain's work on the media industry as understood through the struggles and debates surrounding copyright, patents, and media ownership. Likewise, Jennifer Holt's research on the future of the internet as corporately owned or a common carrier, has only been touched on in a cursory way. Similarly, Philip Schlesinger and David Hesmondhalgh's significant work on media policy and the cultural industries is of increasing importance in this field, but this has not been explored in this thesis. From the perspective of media literacy, Henry Jenkins work on media education has been a huge influence on that ways in which educational departments within TV channels have thought about documentary as learning tools (interview with Matt Locke, Head of Crossplatform and former Head of Education, Channel 4 and Nick Simons, Head of Multiplatform Learning BBC). However, because this thesis only touches on those areas in a cursory way, they are not elaborated on in great detail here.

3 Research design - Methods and methodologies

In *The Production of Entertainment Media*, Amanda D. Lotz and Horace Newcomb describe six¹⁷ 'levels of analysis' or approaches to production studies: 'national or international political economy and policy'; 'specific industrial contexts and practices', 'particular organizations'; 'studios, production companies and networks'; 'individual productions'; 'individual agents'; and 'prosumers and produsage.' Inspired by David Bordwell's historical poetics, Lotz and Newcomb argue for the importance of exploring the options open to media makers in any situation, at any point of time and in specific social, political, cultural and economic contexts, while attending to industrial, regulatory and economic factors. Thus, the six analytic levels should not be seen in isolation, but must be understood as interdependent, as to not do so would be to ignore the complexity of media production and could lead to over-deterministic or reductive conclusions (Lotz & Newcomb, 2012, pp. 71-72). Allocating preferred methods and methodologies to each level of analysis, Lotz and Newcomb nevertheless stress the importance of a wide range of methodologies and analytic tools to capture the complexity of media production at any level today. They write: 'In order to develop an accordingly complex study of media production, it is necessary to apply a wide range of analytical approaches to an equal range of sources.' (Lotz & Newcomb, 2012, p. 78)

The research design of this thesis covers and sometimes oscillates between two levels: the industrial level and produsage levels of analysis whilst also incorporating textual analysis, especially in the final article of the thesis. Following Lotz and Newcomb, the research design also recognises the 'multiple types of influence' on each of these levels arising from the interconnectedness of the media industry as a whole and its many interests, practices, economies, institutions, organisation as well as professional and amateur bodies. Reflecting this, the sources of evidence and methods of this thesis are varied and multiple sources of data serve to complement and corroborate the points made in each article. Each of the four articles of this thesis centres on one case study of a specific aspect of documentary film and content in a multiplatform context. All the articles build on a selection of multiplatform documentaries as well as a series of qualitative interviews with fourteen key informants: commissioning editors, producers and policy-makers within the British documentary industry.

The first three articles are predominantly industry level analyses. In an earlier essay, *Industry-Level Studies and the Contribution of Gitlin's Inside Prime Time*, Lotz defines these as follows:

¹⁷ The level of presumption and produsage discussed in this chapter is an addition to Lotz and Newcomb's five levels of analysis as described, for example, in Amanda D. Lotz's 2009 chapter *Industry-Level Studies and the Contribution of Gitlin's Inside Prime Time* (2009b).

Industry-level studies exist then in between the particularity of studies of specific studios, networks, and 'productions' (i.e., a certain show or film) and the broadest vantage for examining these issues, studies of the national and international political economy and policy level [...] Industry-studies' object of analysis necessitates a negotiation among the methods of the more macro political economy scale and micro examination of individual organizations and productions. (2009b, p. 27)

Thus, these articles focus on, on the one hand, how individual and groups of documentary films are financed, produced and distributed, and, on the other, and in a wider context, the socio-economic and institutional contexts in which these documentaries emerge and exist. Thus, the institutional frameworks that commission, broadcast and distribute documentary films as well as documentation pertaining to scheduling, commissioning policy and programming decisions will be used to contextualise and reflect on the output, distribution and production of documentary films on and offline.

In the first two articles, the findings from the interviews and cases of documentary films are contextualised and complemented by data generated by the documentary industry itself. These are the broadcasters' Producers' Guidelines, Editorial Policies (Ed Pol), commissioning briefs and stated programme strategies as found on websites, in annual reports and announced at festivals, channel commissioning briefings and open days for producers and on the broadcasters' commissioning websites. This thesis will cross-reference the broadcasters' own data with material – statistics, analysis and opinion pieces - from the TV industry's trade publications (*Broadcast* and *PACT Magazine*), mainstream and general media and technology magazines and blogs (*Wired*, *Media Guardian*, *Indywire*, *SIDF* and *Tribeca Festival blog*) as well as governmental, legislative or regulatory directives, reports and statistics. The employment of various sources of precisely these types of data from the industry is a methodology recommended by Lotz when conducting industry level analysis (2009b, p. 33).

All the articles explore aspects of documentary in a multiplatform mediascape, and as users per definition are involved in intrinsically and extrinsically interactive documentaries in various degrees and ways, the four articles also situate themselves on the 'prosumer and produsage' level of analysis (Lotz & Newcomb, 2012, p. 78). Lotz and Newcomb write: 'Examining how the mechanics of production and storytelling change as amateurs move within the established media infrastructure might yield new understandings of the norms of both amateur and industrial production.' (op. cit.) Especially article three and four include 'prosumer and produsage' level of analysis. The third article is, as already mentioned, mainly an industry level study and therefore draws on some of the material described above. It also incorporates 'prosumer and produsage' level analysis and a textual-analytical approach to explore the creation, co-existence, and collision between content created by, on the one

hand, established media institution and organisation and, on the other, producers and users. The fourth and final article of this thesis explores docu-games, a hybrid form that (professes to) blend(s) video games with documentary content. As opportunities for interactivity increases across platforms and media forms and genres, this article explores the ways in which docu-games seek to disseminate knowledge and facts about reality in ways that can be described as documentary, albeit in the context of game or a simulation where the narrative and interaction is – seemingly – decided by the gamer. In this analysis of docu-games, an intrinsically interactive documentary form, textual, genre and production/programming analysis as well as documentary theory dominate. However, this article also leans on data provided by the fourteen interviewees, especially those exploring the educational potential of interactive media for example Matt Locke, former Head of Crossplatform and Learning at Channel 4, Nick Simons, Head of Education at BBC Scotland, and Lucy Willis, Executive Producer at Raw.

Relying on data from multiple sources and triangulating these to illuminate aspects of multiplatform documentary is an attempt to ensure construct validity as defined by Yin (Yin, 1994, 2003, pp. 97-102) and Neergaard (2001, p. 36), a point to which I shall return.

Documentary films as case studies

The documentary cases are, as previously mentioned, multiplatform documentary films or content, i.e. documentaries that either incorporate interactive elements in their narrative or structure, or that travel across platform in their making, production or distribution process. Thus, the four articles in this thesis are what Robert E. Stake calls a collective case study (2000), i.e. a selection of cases, documentary films and content online and on TV, chosen with the assumption that ‘understanding them will lead to a better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases’ (ibid. p. 437), in this case the various forms of documentary films in a multiplatform context.

Following Stake, the cases in this thesis can be represented by the following typology of multiplatform documentaries (2000, p. 446), which has already been described in greater detail in the previous pages:

- Documentaries that are intrinsically multiplatform and interactive in their content and storylines.
- Documentaries that are extrinsically multiplatform in that they are funded, distributed and promoted across platforms.

Methods of industry-level studies

Directives and reports from public bodies

In order to inform sections of this project that relate to or influence policy decisions, I have relied on information from government and regulators' directives and annual reports. Here, I am specifically referring to Ofcom's annual Communications Reports and Public Service Reports of 2008 to 2011¹⁸ (Ofcom, 2008, 2009, 2010b, 2010/2011, 2011a, 2011b) as well as the British government's report *Digital Britain* (Carter, 2009) which charts the (previous) UK government's plans for how the UK should develop in a digital world and is also a source of statistics about digital developments in the UK.

Trade and industry publications

For information about channel strategies, commissioning priorities and changes in editorial teams, I have relied on the corporate, commissioning sections of the channels' websites, 38minutes.ning.com, 4iP.com (both now defunct), and channel4.com/4producers (now www.channel4.com/info/commissioning/4producers) for Channel 4 and www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning and BBC Backstage for the BBC. Up-to-date information on the industry in general, statistics and analysis of viewing figures, announcements about new editorial priorities, commissions, productions, industry and technology news has been found in the TV and content industries' trade magazines, particularly the UK TV industry's weekly newspaper *Broadcast*, as well as in the press, for example, the weekly 'Media' and 'Technology' sections of *The Guardian* newspaper, the US film industry magazine *Variety* and popular web and technology journals like *Wired* magazine.

The BFI's (British Film Institute) online archive has been an invaluable source for information about individual documentary films and documentary strands.

Quantitative data - statistics and viewing figures

For budgets and spend overviews and statistics about the TV industry as well as the documentary film production sector I have relied on data from annual reports from Ofcom, PACT, the BFI (the former UK Film

¹⁸ Ofcom is the abbreviation of the Office of Communications, the independent telecommunications regulator and competition authority for the communications industries in Great Britain.

Council) and each of the broadcasters with emphasis on the BBC and Channel 4. Viewing figures are BARB's official weekly and overnight figures as published on its website www.barb.co.uk¹⁹ and in *Broadcast*.

Qualitative data

Interviews, statements at industry events and quotes in press

The qualitative data of this Ph.D. thesis comes from interviews with, statements and quotations from fourteen key players in the documentary industry, from the commissioning, policy and production sides. These have been collected in different contexts and ways:

- Interviews conducted with fourteen key players, recorded and transcribed for the purposes of this research. Transcription of these can be found in the appendix of this thesis. Appendix I lists the names and affiliations of the interviewees.
- Statements and quotations collected at panel discussions or commissioning meetings at channel open days, commissioning events, industry workshops, symposiums and festivals. These have been collected in the form of field notes. Appendix II lists these events.
- Quotations from key players in the industry as cited in commissioning briefs, on channel commissioning websites or in interviews published in the daily press or trade magazines. The specific sources of these are listed above.

The assumption here is that there is no hierarchy between these different sources of empirical data. Statements from websites, quotations from field notes and interviews are taken as equally valid and analysed in the same way. I will return to the reason for this and discuss the theory of this approach in the final parts of this chapter.

Interviews with the documentary industry professionals

To uncover new developments and trends and understand current and past developments and commissions more fully, in the commissioning, production and distribution aspects of multiplatform documentaries, I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with a selected group of fourteen key informants of industry professionals.

¹⁹ BARB, the Broadcasters' Audience Research Board, is the organisation responsible for providing official measurements of UK television audiences.

Interviews - the questions

The interviews were based on semi-structured, open-ended questions and took between one hour and one-and-a-half hours to complete. Each interview was conducted essentially in the same manner. Each interviewee was introduced to the purpose of the interview in relation to the research question of the Ph.D. with the same wording. The interviewees were then asked questions with approximately the same wording and, unless the answers invited the pursuit of a certain area at a different time, the order of questions and areas explored followed the same order. Please see the appendix for transcriptions of each interview.

In each interview, questions were asked in four different areas relating to multiplatform documentary and its industry:

- General thoughts about what the internet and Web 2.0 has meant for the TV industry in the UK in the past and now.
- The effect of multiplatform, 360 programming and UGC on documentary film industry in the UK.
- The effect of multiplatform, 360 programming and UGC on documentary film, both in individual cases of films and as a genre. Possibilities and problems for documentary films and content.
- In which ways (if at all) do and/or should convergence and multiplatform content impact on current policy and regulation.

However, the questions were tailored to the individual interviewee and the weighting of each section varied depending on the position and personality of the interviewee. For example, when interviewing John McVay the Director of PACT, it seemed obvious to focus on policy and the general effect of convergence on the industry as this is precisely the area of PACT's remit. It made less sense to ask about individual projects or specific aspect of production. John McVay has been hugely influential in shaping UK TV policy and regulation, indeed, it was McVay who negotiated the UK independent producers' commended and groundbreaking Terms of Trade, but he has never made a programme himself nor been involved in the production of one.

Research sample - the interviewees

The interviewees were purposively selected as expert informants (Neergaard, 2001, pp. 29-30). The criteria for inclusion in the sample was that all interviewees were actively involved in the multiplatform documentary industry, but occupied different key positions within this ecology, either in the production, commissioning, distribution or policy side of multiplatform documentaries. The sample chosen therefore includes seven senior executives and commissioning editors of documentary and multiplatform content from three broadcasters:

Channel 4, the BBC and current.tv UK (Channel 4 and current.tv are involved in commissioning and broadcasting only, while, the BBC, is involved in both content production and commissioning and broadcasting). The interviewees occupy various - sometimes overlapping - roles in corporate planning, strategic management, content acquisition and management of digital content, and programme production. In many cases only one person in the UK occupies a certain role and the choice of this expert informant was therefore a given. Representing the production side of the documentary industry, six key informants were interviewed from boutique, medium-sized and superindie²⁰ production companies of the independent production sector, as well as the director of its trade organisation, PACT. Originally, the intention was also to interview in-house BBC producers, but after the reduction in permanent staff in the early 2000s (Born, 2005) and a further three rounds of production staff redundancies between 2007 and 2009, the BBC now has only skeletal in-house staff²¹ consisting mainly of commissioners and executive producers. This plan was therefore abandoned and instead the sample concentrated on a sample of independent producers that delivered content to both the BBC and Channel 4. Names, positions and organisational affiliations are listed in Appendix I.

Ethical considerations and consent

As perspectives, views and level of organisational and practical knowledge vary depending on which position one occupies in the documentary industry, it was my judgement that it was absolutely important and relevant to mention what position the interviewee held when citing them. This has informed considerations about whether or not to disclose the identity of the informants. In many cases, only one person in the UK occupies a certain position in the documentary industry, therefore it seemed pointless to disguise the interviewees as their answers would easily have given away their identity. I shall return to the implications of this for the reliability of the interviews on the following pages.

The interviewees were informed about the purpose of the interview as well as the overall intent of the dissertation before and during the interview. Both were described in the email sent with the initial request for an interview, and this was also repeated verbally as a set introduction that I gave before commencing each of the interviews. The interviewees were also advised that the interviews were recorded and, when physically present, or if on Skype camera, shown the recording device. The interviewees were also told that they would be quoted in the

²⁰ Superindie is the common term in industry parlance for a multinational conglomeration of production companies like for example Endemol.

²¹ In the last decade immense pressure has been put on BBC in-house mid- to low-level production staff to go freelance and take up lucrative pension packages and additional bonuses (one month's wages for each year of employment at the BBC). When going freelance, staff can take up shorter contracts of up to one year with the BBC after a quarantine period of only six weeks. This means that very few in-house production staff with real options of re-employment either with the BBC or elsewhere remain with the BBC today.

dissertation itself as well as, possibly, in papers, articles and presentations, related to the Ph.D. They all gave their consent to this, which was recorded on tape. The sections of the interviews in which interviewees spoke outside of citation were removed from the transcriptions. Once a transcription was completed, the interviewees were sent a copy via email, in order to make sure that they were happy with the material and its publication in the appendix of this dissertation and to ensure that there was no other material that was outside of citation. The majority of respondents replied that they were happy for their interviews to be included as they stood. A few interviewees did not reply, however, in respect of the general constraints on their time, the email was written so they did not need to take action unless they were unhappy with the inclusion of the transcript of their interviews. One interviewee wanted a reference to a company that had evolved removed because his description now sounded 'dated', another wanted a link to a website added and a third wanted references to marketing strategies, actual budgets and viewing figures removed. I complied with all requests, as the two first were minor and inconsequential changes and the third is information that I know companies are under contractual obligations not to disclose. This request was therefore a reasonable one. Had I not complied, I could potentially have landed the respondent in breach of contract with a broadcaster, compromised the trust between interviewer and interviewee and jeopardised future contact, collaborations and research possibilities.

Deliberation on Methods and Methodological choices

Generalisation or external validity of sample

In the sample of expert informants, each interviewee was selected to represent the voice of one segment of the documentary industry, and each was chosen on the assumption that he or she occupies a key, and hence privileged, position within this section and therefore speaks for the interests and actions that exist within it.

That said, this sample is not large enough to accurately represent variations within the entirety of each segment and it is therefore possible that an informant does not express the opinions and views of his or her peers and colleagues. Similarly, it is impossible for an informant to represent the variety of beliefs, point of views and interpretations within his or her segment. However, the aim of this sample is to create an embedded research design (Neergaard, 2001; Yin, 1994, pp. 41-42) which throws light on documentary in a multiplatform context through a variety of voices and from various industrial and organisational strata and perspectives. The idea is that these different perspectives will enforce and complement each other and create a nuanced view of the

documentary sector today. Thus, the different voices of the interviewees will act like a kaleidoscope illuminating different aspects – albeit with differently tinted glasses - of multiplatform documentaries.

In the model below each peripheral node represent one interviewee offering his or her perspective on the central node of the figure which represents the subject of this thesis, namely multiplatform documentary. The identities of these interviewees are listed in appendix I. The nodes are colour coded to represent different sections of the UK documentary industry. Interviewees working on the commissioning teams of Channel 4 are purple; commissioning editors and programme makers working in-house in the BBC blue; the online TV channels like current.tv are red; policymakers, like the Director of PACT, are orange; and producers and directors of the independent production sector are yellow.

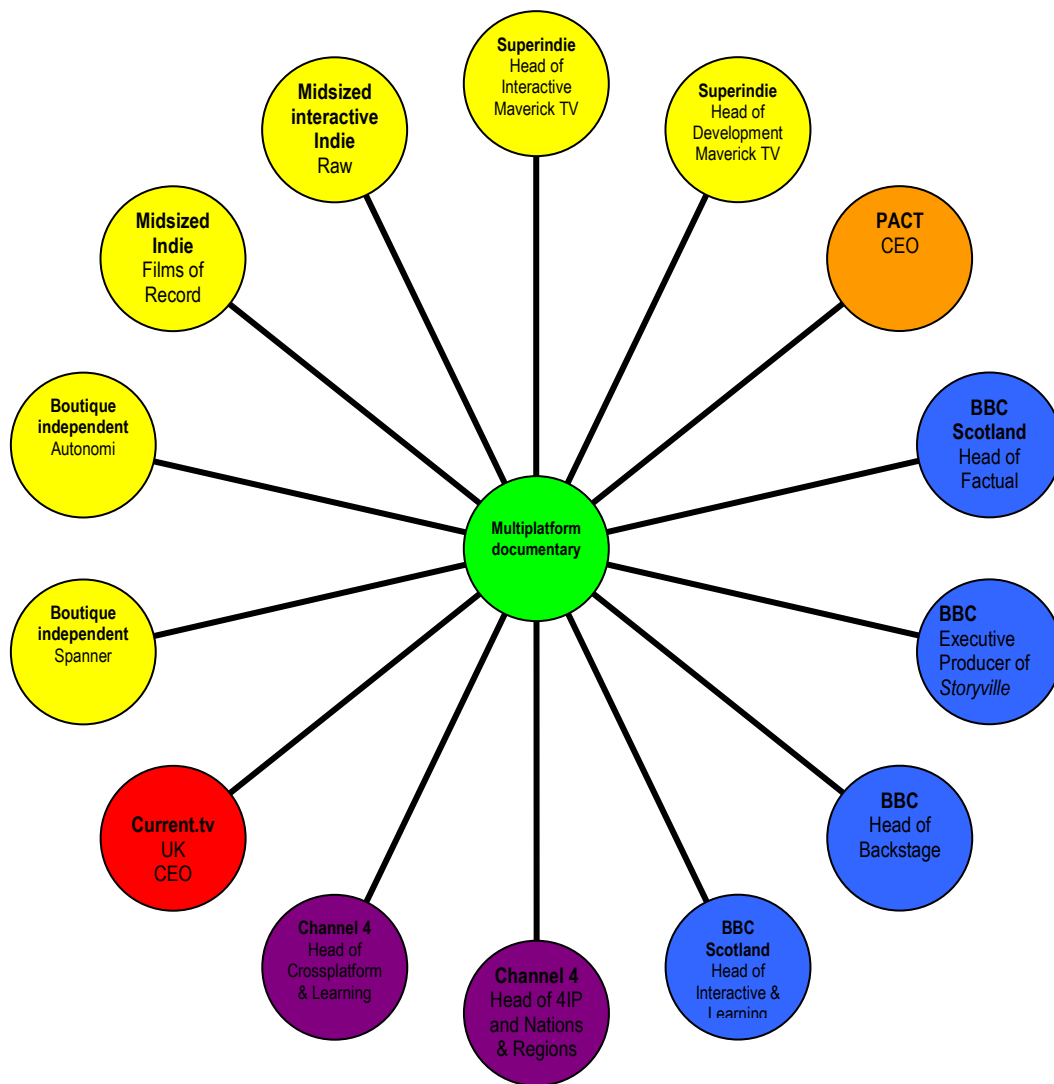
The commercial PSB broadcaster Channel 4

The publicly funded PSB broadcaster BBC

The online documentary channel current.tv

Policy of Independent Production Companies

Independent Production Companies



Construct validity

In order to address the complexities of studying an evolving research topic and, in the timeframe in which the Ph.D. project unfolded, a continually growing and developing set of case studies, the research design, as previously mentioned, relies on multiple sources of empirical data and triangulation of these sources and data (Höijer, 2008; Lotz, 2009a; Yin, 1994, pp. 85-86, 2005, pp. 97-102). Thus, the empirical data collected from the interviews were cross-referenced with data from trade magazines, and newspapers; attendance of industry events; as well as statistics from industry, government and watchdogs. This process of referencing interviews with data from statistics, official reports, trade publications and industry events is a methodology suggested by Amanda D. Lotz and Horace Newcomb when conducting research on the analytic level of 'specific industrial

contexts and practices' (Lotz, 2009, p. 33; Lotz & Newcomb, 2012, p. 71 & 78), as mentioned above. This process also results in what Neergaard and Yin terms construct validity (op. cit.)

Methodologically the thesis draws on the social sciences, media and television research and production studies. It also draws on practical knowledge of documentary production and media industry practices and policies in the UK and therefore, albeit to a lesser extent, refers to participation-observation, as I shall return to in more detail on the following pages. The process of data-triangulation described above is, in this way, matched by methodological triangulation (Yin, 1994, pp. 91-92, 2003) and is an attempt to ensure a larger degree of validity.

Reliability

The issue of reliability arises both in relation to the interviews conducted, field notes and participation-observation.

Reliability of others

It is possible, that the fact that the interviewees know that their identity will be disclosed influence what they say, and that informants would be more forthcoming and frank if they were speaking 'off the record', so to speak. The overriding consideration when deciding to name the interviewees was that, as described above, it was considered important to mention the position of each interviewee when citing them. This makes each interview easily identifiable because generally in the higher strata of the industry only one person holds a specific position at a certain time, rendering attempt to hide the identity of an interviewee pointless. Also, on reflection it was judged that hiding the identity of the interviewees would not have yielded significantly more or backstage information. All the informants in this thesis are media professionals whose daily job it is to speak publicly, through and to the media. It seems unlikely they would let slip to a researcher confidential data that they will not disclose in any other public forum.

Discourse analysis in production studies

John T. Caldwell's approach to interviewing and analysing media professionals in the US, and particularly in Hollywood's film sector, has informed the assessment of the reliability of the statements of the interviewees of this project. In *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (2008), Caldwell describes some of the problems with the process and outcome of conducting interviews with media professionals, especially those above the line. Caldwell argues that self-reflexivity and theorising around one's

own role in the production ecology and media in general are inherent – and increasingly so - amongst media workers and is a response to and way of dealing with changes in production cultures and economies.

In *Critical Industrial Practice: Branding, Repurposing, and the Migratory Patterns of Industrial Texts* (2006), Caldwell, as described in the previous chapter, describes the collapse of the differentiation between primary, secondary and tertiary texts, which leads to increasing levels of meta-narratives on all levels, and thus also to increases in self-reflection and self-deliberation of the role(s) production staff play in the production process. In the final equation, it is impossible to distinguish promotion from production and fact from fiction and thus talk about *one's* work becomes talk about *the* work. In *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*, Caldwell reflects that 'relative work also, fundamentally, embodies critical intelligence,' (2008, p. 342) and invites researchers to go 'underneath and debunk industry bullshit, spin and selfpromotion' as well as see through the 'cultural flak of personal branding' (Ibid., p. 318) by, firstly, interviewing other production workers than those above the line and, secondly, employing discourse analysis to these interviews in order to examine what really goes on in production houses and studios. In this thesis, the perception of the views expressed by the media professionals interviewed here is slightly more forgiving than Caldwell's. Although Caldwell's points are astute, valid and taken on board, and recognising that his descriptions prevail in an industry where 'you're only as good as your last job', it has always been the job description and livelihood of media professional to talk up and promote their products. Also, professionals, who work with audiovisual media and are used to discuss and pitch audiovisual concepts and ideas to a variety of people, often like to see themselves as 'visual persons' and speak in visual, entertaining and hyperbolic metaphors. From that follows, too, that the interviewees are likely to say the same whoever they speak to: other media professionals, journalists, film critics or academics.

In *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*, Caldwell states that his 'cultural-industrial' research method relies on four registers: 'textual analysis of technology trade and workers artefacts, interviews with film/TV workers, especially below-the-line workers, ethnographic field observation of production spaces and professional gatherings; and economic/industrial analysis.' (2008, p. 405) Caldwell's approaches and methods are a clear inspiration for this thesis and the four registers of his 'industrial critical' method are mirrored here. Therefore, following Caldwell and Klaus Bruhn Jensen who suggests a similar approach (Bruhn Jensen, 2008, pp. 75-77, 159), the statements and views of the interviewees in this thesis will be met critically and with a dose of discourse analysis. Also, as described before, the interviewee sample does not only include executives, but also independent producers from smaller production houses. Although these are, using Caldwell's terminology, 'above the line' in individual productions and production houses, they might not be

so in the larger documentary industry ecology. In fact many of them see themselves as smaller and sometimes inconsequential fish in a big pond as, for example, Marie Olesen, award-winning producer and director of Autonomi Films and Franny Armstrong, director of *The Age of Stupid* and documentary company Spanner Films, point out in their interviews. The inclusion of people across the industry ecology serves to moderate the opinions and views across the sample. Also, as described above, their statements will be cross-referenced with other empirical data.

Reliability of self

Before returning to academia and commencing this Ph.D., I worked for a decade in various production roles in the independent TV production sector in the UK. In production, I got my first job as a researcher in 1998, moved through the ranks as associate and assistant producer and eventually became as producer and series producer of documentaries, arts and factual programmes as well as interactive content for Channel 4, Scottish Television (ITV's subsidiary in Scotland), BBC Northern Ireland, BBC Scotland and Five. Occupying various production roles, I worked for both for small independent factual production companies (Caledonia TV, Saltire TV, Hopscotch Films and Extreme Production), medium-sized documentary, factual and arts production houses, such as Muriel Gray and Hamish Barbour's *Ideal World*, Kirsty Wark and Alan Clement's *Wark Clements & Co.*, as well as for multi-genre and crossmedia superindies like the RDF-owned, IWC (the merger of *Wark Clements & Co.* and *Ideal World*). Working in programme development, I was also a development researcher based in the Research Centre in Channel 4's office in Glasgow from 1999 to 2001, a development producer for *Ideal World* at various times over the years and Head of Development for Caledonia TV (the former Caledonia, Sterne & Wyld) between 2003 and 2004.

For this production and programme development experience to count as participant-observation there needs to be reflections on methodological and theoretical approaches and ethical considerations. Crucially, there should be field notes, logistic logs and reflections making possible thick description of this environment and its practices (Bruhn Jensen, 2008, pp. 132-134) and ensuring reliability (Yin, 1994, p. 33). Unfortunately, none of this exists. Although I always had a desire to return to academia, at the time, I worked in the industry, I did not study it. So, I took no fields notes, kept no records nor, in any other way, documented my practices, roles and functions carried out during this period of my life. Although this production knowledge is therefore 'hidden' and undocumented in physical form, it seems churlish to disregard it altogether. Having one foot in academia and one in production has in made this thesis possible and informed its structure. It has helped me identify research questions and under-explored areas of practices. It has enabled me to formulate relevant, informed industry-based questions and identify people in the know to ask these to. Also my background in traditional documentary production as well as

in interactive, cross-platform media has given me a thorough and practical understanding of how documentaries are commissioned, produced and distributed in the UK as well as an insider perspective on developments in interactive broadcasting. It was given me access to people, places and events that others outside the industry would perhaps struggle to get access to, as, for example, Georgina Born describes that she encountered in her ethnographic study of the BBC (Born, 2005, p. 17).

Participant-observation and observational participants - industry access, knowledge and know how

Occupying a position of, in Caldwell's term, 'both sides of the fence' is of course not unique to me. In the US, Horace Newcomb was a screenwriter and Barry Dornfield a documentary maker before establishing themselves as academics (Caldwell, 2009, p. 215). In the UK, Jeannette Steemers worked for HIT Entertainment and Jon Dovey, Michael Chanan, John Ellis and Jane Chapman were TV and documentary producers before joining higher education. Some stay on both sides of the fence, John T. Caldwell, for example, is still a film producer and in the UK, Alex Krotoski is both a reader at the British Library and the presenter and writer of the BBC series *The Digital Revolution* (BBC; 2010, UK). These scholars have successfully managed to incorporate their industry experience into their academic work. Caldwell suggests that as the boundaries between production and audience roles collapse, so do those between professions, so there are more interactions between academics and production staff today than there ever has been. Academics in production studies often fulfil production roles too and are thus more like 'observational participants' than 'participant observers' in the traditional academic sense (2009, p. 215). In fact, according to Caldwell, 'scholar-practitioners' offer a vantage point in production studies. Interviewing three scholar-practitioners about their methods in his chapter *Both Sides of the Fence: Blurred Distinctions in Scholarship and Production (a Portfolio of Interviews)* (2009), Caldwell explores how 'insider' knowledge might provide additional skills that can cut through 'the industry's layers of carefully managed flak' (ibid., 214).

Thus it can be argued that cross-referencing with my production experience can add validity to the interviews conducted for this thesis rather than detracting from them. Triangulating my own experiences with the data from the interviews I conducted, analysis, reports and statistics in the trade press, industry organisations and watchdogs has not only directed and balanced my own research question, it is also a step towards insuring the overall reliability of all aspects and data involved. Conversely, the disadvantage of using my hidden production experience is of course that much like the interviewees in this thesis I cannot always be relied upon to remember data correctly and relate events in an unbiased way (Yin, 1994, p. 89). As a consequence I have referred to own practical industry experiences carefully, always bearing in mind and reflecting on my own background, previous knowledge and connective framework when doing so. Also, I have looked to these academics with similar

experience and background and taken guidance from their methodologies, reflections on their own practices and the ways in which they incorporate their industry experience into their academic work. Thus, attempting to safeguard my production experience, the overall judgement was that this knowledge, rather than being a hindrance, offered a proactive and unique opportunity for practice based reflection, and consequently a valuable contribution to the articles in this thesis and this on many levels.

Concluding remarks on research design

This thesis consists of four articles covering four aspects of documentary films in a multiplatform context. These case studies are all multiple-case embedded designs. In line with the methodology of production studies, the analysis of the first three articles takes place on industry level, the third also incorporates 'prosumer and produsage' level as well as textual analysis, and the fourth relies on textual-discursive analysis of interactive media. With reference to the methodologies of especially the production studies scholars Lotz, Newcomb and Caldwell, I have attempted to secure construct and external validity and reliability by triangulating multiple sources of evidence and data: interviews, documentary artefacts, observation-participation, statistics and reports from industry and governmental organisations and bodies.

Part 2 – The articles

Sørensen, I. (2012) Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing. The Impact of Online Funding and Distribution on the Documentary Film Industry in the UK. In *Media, Culture & Society* 34(6) 726–743.

Article 1 Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing. The Impact of Online Funding and Distribution on the Documentary Film Industry in the UK

Abstract

This article compares traditional and new ways of funding documentary film in the UK and asks what crowd financing, pay-if-you-want schemes and online distribution sites mean for documentary films and its industry today. How do online financing models impact on producers, traditional funding models and funders? And following the money, who really benefits? The first section of this article charts trends in British documentary budgets in the last decade and explores how changes in financing impact on the production of documentary films. The second focuses on new ways of funding and distributing documentary films online. Drawing on case studies of crowd investment schemes, crowdfunding and P2P distribution; interviews with documentary and multiplatform producers and commissioners, as well as on statistics and annual reports from broadcasters, lobbyists and regulators, I will argue that in real terms there has been a decline in and a polarization of documentary budgets in the UK. As a result, producers are increasingly looking to the internet to fund their documentaries. However, an online financing market suspended between ad hoc funding and longterm recuperation has consequences for the documentary industry, the kinds of documentaries made, the topics they explore and the ways in which they are produced.

Keywords

crowdfunding, crowdsourcing, documentary, documentary budgets, documentary funding, documentary industry, online distribution, online funding, UK broadcasting

Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing. The Impact of Online Funding and Distribution on the Documentary Film Industry in the UK

In September 2011, Nick Broomfield's *Sarah Palin: You Betcha!* raised \$30,000 for distribution through the crowdfunding site [Kickstarter](#). In 2009, the world's most successful crowd investment effort landed Franny Armstrong £900,000 for her drama-doc *The Age of Stupid* and Jamie King's *Steal This Film II* financed itself retrospectively through its bit-torrent powered pay-if-you-want scheme. Online documentary financing and distribution are no longer niche activities for newbie producers. At a time of global recession, reductions in TV advertising revenue and polarisation of British broadcasters' documentary budgets, established UK documentary filmmakers are increasingly looking to the internet for alternative ways to supplement documentary budgets, fund and distribute their films (Sørensen, 2010).

This article will explore some of the ways in which documentary films, and especially the single documentary, have been financed in the UK in the last decade. Specifically, it will focus on how new ways of funding documentaries online are impacting on the documentary industry as a whole, as well as on individual films.

Although online financing models for documentary are in their infancy, the success of some of these suggests that the internet could become a financially viable alternative means of funding certain kinds of documentary films. Funding and distribution forms on the internet are establishing themselves alongside the funding and distribution models of the 'traditional' networked TV broadcaster. However, online funding and distribution break with the ways in which documentaries have been and, to a great extent, still are funded in the UK. Today, the vast majority of documentary films produced in Britain are commissioned and fully-funded by one of the four terrestrial broadcasters: BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Five and their subsidiary channels (BBC Two, BBC Three, BBC Four, ITV2, More4, E4, Fiver, Five US). The TV broadcaster which commissions a particular documentary film has the right to show it twice on its channel. After two transmissions, the rights to the film revert to its producer or production company²². So, a documentary on Channel 4 will typically have been fully funded by Channel 4, one on the BBC by the BBC, and so on. This British funding model is different from that in, for example, the US, where deficit-financing is the norm (Doyle, 2002, pp. 82-83). The UK system also differs from

²² The producers' ability to retain the right to the production is a relative new phenomenon in the UK. It was established in the changes to the terms of trade between independent producers and broadcasters that was negotiated by PACT in 2004. Before these, the broadcaster that funded the film would have the rights to the production in all media, all territories and in perpetuity. However, as I will return to later in this article, these terms are currently being undermined. PACT is the TV and film producers' trade-organisation in the UK.

other European and North American countries where documentaries are often co-produced and co-financed by various funders in different countries, or where national film boards and councils act as a co-producer, investing up to 50% of the cost of the production, as is the case in, for example, Denmark, Norway and Canada.

Although broadcaster-backed fully-funded commissions still account for the majority of documentary financing in the UK today, this is in decline. Commissions by one of the four networked broadcasters fell from 90% in 2004 to 79% in 2009 (PACT, 2009, p. 14)²³. But, while two models for funding and distributing documentary films - online and through the TV networks – should, on the face of it, benefit both filmmakers and broadcasters, in reality both systems are propelling a drive towards a polarisation of budgets for documentary films. This has consequences for the industry as a whole as well as for the ways documentaries are made, distributed and seen.

Structure and method

This article consists of two intertwined parts which both explore aspects of the financing and distribution of documentary films in the UK today. Firstly, in order to explain why it has become attractive for documentary producers - independent filmmakers as well as superindies - to seek funding from other sources than the broadcasters, I will start with a short history of trends in documentary funding in Britain in the last decade. I will argue that, as well as obviously influencing individual budgets directly, declining budgets and new funding and distribution forms online have also impacted on the broadcasters' commissioning and funding priorities for documentary films. This has had consequences for the types of documentary films that are being produced in the UK today and the topics they explore.

The second part will focus on specific cases of crowd investment, crowdfunding and P2P distribution schemes, and explore how documentary makers like Nick Broomfield, Franny Armstrong, and Jamie King are funding and distributing documentaries online. I will compare these online distribution and funding forms to the models of the traditional TV broadcasters which, as already stated, dominate the UK documentary film market, and ask how these new online possibilities are impacting on the documentary industry as a whole: the role of the producer, the actual production process of documentary films and the TV channels' commissioning process and priorities.

²³ The data in this census is for all primary commissions and does not provide numbers for commissions by specific genres. However, it is mentioned that drama and entertainment are the genres with the most external funding. It can therefore be assumed that the percentage of full funding for documentary is in fact the same or higher than the 79%.

The first section draws mainly on annual reports and statistics from TV stations, government, regulators such as Ofcom (the Office of Communication, the ombudsman for the British telecommunications and broadcasting industries) and PACT (the Producers' Alliance for Cinema and Television, which is the British TV industry's trade organisation), as well as information from the trade press and the British TV channels' commissioning briefs for the industry. The second section is based on analyses of specific cases of crowd-financing and online distribution. Both sections are cross-referenced with and corroborated by fourteen interviews with key documentary and multiplatform commissioning executives from online and networked TV stations (the BBC, Channel 4 and current.tv), the Director of PACT as well as independent documentary producers from boutique production companies and superindies.

Theories and practices

Documentary film funding online is a relatively new phenomenon and so, too, is research into this field. Whereas mobilising and generating audiences through crowdsourcing and organising campaigns around documentary screenings and causes have been explored by, for example, Christian Christiansen (2009) and Ib Bondebjerg (2010), the financial equivalents, crowdfunding and other forms of financing and distributing documentary on the internet, have so far received little critical attention.

Economics rarely receives the attention it could and perhaps should in media studies, as Gillian Doyle notes (2002, p. 1). However, this is changing. For example John T. Caldwell (2006, 2008), Jonathan Gray (2010), Gillian Doyle (2002, 2011), Wilma de Jong (2009), and Zvezdan Vukanovic (2009) have researched the strategic and economic implications of convergence and multiplatform programming from the perspective of media organisations and institutions in the US and the UK. Although Doyle's *Understanding Media Economics* predates Web 2.0, it anticipates most of the developments and implications for media production. Indeed, Doyle returns to the economics of multiplatform and 360 programming in 'From Television to Multiplatform: Less from More or More for Less?' (2011). Here, she concludes that for broadcasters the cost of online content at this point in time outweighs its value. Vukanovic explores the impact of economics on the scope for economic performance of the five largest media companies in the US (2009). Caldwell debunks the primacy of texts in a multiplatform world and economy (2006) and in *Show Sold Separately*, Gray applies a similar argument to specific case studies and calls for further research into the paratexts that surround media texts and what he calls 'off-screen studies' (2010). Henry Jenkins' (2006) and Yokai Benkler's (2006) theories about the implications of interaction, user participation and convergence for media industries and their brands have provided inspiration for thinking about

both the social aspects and macroeconomic implications of Web 2.0. Applying economic theory to the analysis of crowd-funded projects between 2006 and 2010, Chris Ward and Vandana Ramachandran demonstrate that peer effects and recommendations, not network externalities, are driving the success of crowd-funded projects (2010). Similarly, applying economic theories of entrepreneurial funding, menu pricing, free riding and the consumption of discrete goods to crowdfunding, Paul Belleflamme, Lambert, & Schwienbacher conclude that investors in crowd-funded projects generally contribute more than investors normally would and that crowd-funded projects therefore have a unique selling point that creates this extra, surplus value. Thus Belleflamme et al. state that social, entrepreneurial and artistic projects are more likely to crowd-fund successfully (2011). However, none of these explore their economic theories about crowdfunding in relation to documentary films. Finally, although Wilma de Jong's research into the funding of feature documentary film clearly demonstrates the fertility of this approach (2008), media economics is rarely approached from a microeconomic perspective or applied to individual productions.

This article builds on the work of these critics, and their various perspectives and fields of research feed into it. In order to explore how economic trends impact on the actions, activities and behaviour of documentary producers and directors²⁴ in an online context, however, this article focuses on both macroeconomic analysis of financing trends in the documentary industry as well as paying particular attention to the microeconomics of specific cases and professional documentary production practices.

Benkler and Bourdieu

In *The Wealth of Networks* Benkler describes the dynamics of the emerging networked information economy as one in which:

decentralized individual action - specifically, new and important cooperative and coordinate action carried out through radically distributed, nonmarket mechanisms that do not depend on proprietary strategies - plays a much greater role than it did, or could have, in the industrial information economy. (2006, p. 3)

This, he argues, changes the context and premises for our understanding of the (media) economy. Benkler is focussed on the democratic and participatory potential for individual as well as peer-to-peer and community

²⁴ In order to focus on the documentary industry as a business and to distinguish from pro-am produsage and more leisure-based activity online, this article focuses on the practices of professional and established media professionals. Here these are defined as established documentary directors and producers with track records and name recognition with broadcasters and at the box office.

production and he envisages an economy in which 'social production and exchange to play a much larger role, alongside property and market-based production, than they ever have in modern democracies.' He writes:

On the background of these limitations of the mass media, I suggest that the networked public sphere enables many more individuals to communicate their observations and their viewpoints to many others, and to do so in a way that cannot be controlled by media owners and is not as easily corruptible by money as were the mass media [...] The various formats of the networked public sphere provide anyone with an outlet to speak, to inquire, to investigate, without need to access the resources of a major media organization. We are seeing the emergence of new, decentralized approaches to fulfilling the watchdog function and to engaging in political debate and organization. (2006, p. 11)

Crowdfunding, peer-to-peer distribution and other online financing and distribution forms are examples of such approaches and alternatives. But, as Benkler (2006, p. 23) and Jenkins (2006) observe, the old media organisations and institutions are not going to relinquish their oligopoly on documentary and accept this redistribution of power without a fight. However, on closer examination of these new financing forms, it is not just the 'old' and traditional media institutions and organisations which resist change - the cultural capital of producers and users also contributes to the maintenance of old hegemonies and hierarchies of taste. Adding Pierre Bourdieu's notion of distinctions to the equation (1984), the gatekeeping function of the broadcasters is not only embedded in the physical institutional structures, workflows, consciousness and self-understanding of these organisations themselves, it is also very much alive in the minds of the producers and users of the films and media production. The gatekeeping function of broadcasters, festivals and cinemas is as much an embedded institutional and organisational trait, as it serves as a mark of cultural distinction in the field of documentary film production and viewing. To put it bluntly, at this particular point in time, it is cooler to have one's film on the BBC than on YouTube. And it is a mark of greater cultural capital to watch a documentary at a film festival in the cinema than from one's sofa. As I hope to show in the following pages, name recognition, branding and access to esteemed distributions outlets, channels and festivals still determine what is produced, funded and commissioned – and this is as much the case inside the traditional production and distribution systems as it is in the new financing and distribution forums online.

Documentary budgets in decline?

Historically, documentary film budgets have always been under pressure. For example, Goddard, Corner and Richardson's *Public Issue Television* chronicles the ever-present threat of cuts affecting both the content and

editorial integrity of current affairs programmes in the UK (2007). However, in recent years, programme budgets have declined in real terms and this has particularly affected documentary and factual programmes.

In the past decade, advertising revenue for commercial broadcast channels has fallen in the UK. This decline has particularly affected the three commercially funded Public Service Broadcasters (Channel 4, Five and ITV) who saw their total advertising share fall by 16% between 2002 and 2006. In 2007, online advertising spend overtook TV advertising for the first time (Ofcom, 2008) and as TV advertising revenue continued to decline programme budgets were reduced in 2007 and 2008 (PACT, 2008, 2009). The TV industry was - along with most other industries - hit by the 2008 global recession which (at the time of writing) continues to cause economic instability. The recession not only affects consumer confidence and spending power, but has also driven further reductions in spending on advertising, because, as Doyle points out, advertising activity is strongly associated with the performance of economy (2002, pp. 3 and 47-51). This is corroborated by the PACT census of 2009 which lists a 4% reduction in primary programme prices due to the global recession of 2008-2009 (PACT, 2009, p. 38). In May 2009, Channel 4 and ITV announced cuts to their editorial budgets of £75 million and £20 million respectively.

This decline in programme budgets has hit documentary films and factual programming hardest. According to PACT's 2009 census of the independent TV industry: 'The proportion of spend on Factual programming appears to have suffered the greatest decline in 2008, falling from 15% of spend in the 2007 census to an estimated 9% in 2008.' (p. 13) Similarly, Ofcom's 2011 annual PBS Broadcasting Report recorded a 17% decrease in spending in real terms on first-run factual and documentary programmes between 2006 and 2010. In this period, budgets for the factual subgenres Arts/Classical Music, Religion/Ethics and Education fell by 30%, 34% and 23% respectively to £46m, £13m and £19m (Ofcom, 2011). It is worth noting that the number of hours of other types of documentary and factual programming produced by the British PBS channels increased by 24% in this same period. Although advertising revenue stabilised in 2010 and the ban on product placement in TV programmes in the UK was lifted by Ofcom on 28 February 2011, product placement is still prohibited in documentaries and current affairs programmes²⁵. Documentary budgets have remained depressed.

Ofcom's breakdown of PSB overall content and first-run originated spend, by genre is as follows (Ofcom, 2011b):

Broadcasters' expenditure on output, 2006–10

²⁵ Product placement is also banned in news, religious programming and children's TV.

	Spend on hours of first-run originated output								Spend on all hours of output					First run spend			
	2006	2009	2010	Change (£m)		Change (%)		2006	2009	2010	Change (£m)		Change (%)		2006	2009	2010
				4yr	1 yr	4yr	1 yr				4yr	1 yr	4yr	1 yr			
News/current affairs	£340m	£303m	£307m	-£33m	£4m	-10%	1%	£342m	£303m	£308m	-£34m	£5m	-10%	2%	100%	100%	100%
Arts/classical music	£66m	£49m	£46m	-£20m	-£3m	-30%	-5%	£68m	£51m	£48m	-£20m	-£4m	-30%	-7%	97%	95%	96%
Religion and ethics	£20m	£16m	£13m	-£7m	-£2m	-34%	-15%	£21m	£16m	£14m	-£7m	-£2m	-34%	-15%	98%	98%	98%
Education	£25m	£27m	£19m	-£6m	-£7m	-23%	-28%	£27m	£27m	£19m	-£8m	-£7m	-29%	-27%	92%	100%	99%
Factual	£505m	£466m	£418m	-£87m	-£48m	-17%	-10%	£527m	£482m	£430m	-£97m	-£52m	-18%	-11%	96%	97%	97%
Drama and soaps	£727m	£588m	£520m	-£207m	-£68m	-28%	-12%	£889m	£757m	£685m	-£204m	-£72m	-23%	-9%	82%	78%	76%
Entertainment/comedy	£472m	£434m	£436m	-£37m	£2m	-8%	0%	£550m	£483m	£489m	-£61m	£5m	-11%	1%	86%	90%	89%
Film	£9m	£18m	£22m	£13m	£4m	149%	25%	£194m	£218m	£239m	£45m	£21m	23%	10%	5%	8%	9%
Sports	£549m	£427m	£596m	£47m	£169m	9%	39%	£800m	£432m	£596m	-£4m	£164m	-1%	38%	91%	99%	100%
Children's programmes	£101m	£94m	£87m	-£14m	-£8m	-14%	-8%	£124m	£112m	£102m	-£22m	-£10m	-18%	-9%	81%	84%	85%
TOTAL	£2815m	£2421m	£2464m	-£351m	£43m	-12%	2%	£3341m	£2881m	£2930m	-£411m	£49m	-12%	2%	84%	84%	84%

Source: Ofcom/broadcasters. Note: figures are expressed in 2010 prices. BBC figures include BBC One, BBC Two, BBC digital (BBC Three, BBC Four, CBBC, CBeebies, BBC News, BBC Parliament). The analysis does not include S4C, BBC Alba or BBC HD. Figures exclude nations/regions programming.

The decline in budgets has coincided with other significant changes in the television industry and documentary production sector. On the production level, the rise of digital technologies and equipment has led to a general fall in the cost of production equipment, cameras, sound recording equipment, editing and postproduction software (Chapman & Allison, 2009, p. 21; Doyle, 2002; Ofcom, 2011b, p. 8). The effect of this has been twofold. Firstly, it has reduced the cost of equipment and facilities hire and purchase, and secondly it has enabled one person to fulfil the roles of many crew members, effectively reducing the need for large crews on shoots (Doyle, 2002; Gaunt, 2009). Both factors have significantly reduced the cost of the production of documentaries which has in turn been used to justify lower budgets for documentary films.

On the distribution and broadcasting level, documentary and factual budgets have been hit harder than other genres for at least two further reasons. Firstly, and on a distribution level, documentary has, as Corner and others have pointed out, very much been seen as anchored in the TV schedule (1995) and, because the broadcasters have traditionally owned the rights to TV programmes and brands, producers have been unaccustomed or reluctant to exploit secondary markets (Doyle, 2002, p. 83). However, this has changed in recent years, a point to which I shall return. Secondly, documentary films have not, except in very rare cases,

attracted the mass television audiences of other genres, like drama or entertainment. Director of PACT John McVay, linking the decline in budgets to documentary as a genre, explains:

The recession has a major impact on a number of genres. One, all broadcasters have changed the mix of their schedules to go for lower cost, longer run entertainment formats [...] And the service they are really coming down on is areas like documentary because they don't make any money back.

Although documentary is often cheaper to produce than drama, its opportunity cost in terms of lost advertising revenue, is far higher. Consequently, for a commercial broadcaster, documentaries are expensive to air. McVay continues:

And all commercial broadcasters are either required, in terms of the regulation, to show us certain types of programmes, or make money. So, a documentary at seven o'clock on a Thursday night may not cost very much to make, maybe £80,000, but the actual advertising lost in that particular slot can be £200,000. The opportunity cost, i.e. the cost to show that programme is not £80,000, but this cost plus the cost of lost advertising [...] So genres which don't perform in the commercial schedule, they are not getting dumped because of the cost of the production [but] because of the opportunity cost. (Interview with Author)

Or, as Tom Loosemore, the then Head of Channel 4's new media fund 4IP, bluntly put it at Sheffield Documentary Festival 2009: 'Docs don't rate in terms of advertisers.' Channel 4 has a public service remit to commission and show documentaries as does the BBC, but on the commercial channels with no remit or obligation to show documentaries there has been a marked reduction in numbers produced. ITV has all but stopped commissioning documentaries and the decline in budgets has hit the floor on the commercial broadcaster Five. Chris Shaw, Five's then commissioning editor for documentaries, said at the same event: 'We do have slots with zero budget attached to them. How do you get a programme for that? You get someone else to pay for them.' Although there is the commitment and space in the schedule to show documentaries on Five, there is no money. Consequently documentary content on Five needs sponsorship. These reductions in documentary budgets do not only apply to the commercial broadcasters. In an interview in *Broadcast*, Nick Fraser of BBC's Storyville warned:

Documentary-makers were very worried about being overcome by *Big Brother* and 'Big Mac' docs, but I think that phase has passed and the worry is now much more basic. These people are working for nothing. We're talking such small amounts of money, it's getting alarming. (Rushton, 2009)

As Chris Shaw and Nick Fraser's statements indicate, the erosion in budgets has precipitated trends in documentary making that were already there. Firstly, sponsorship of programmes is increasingly commonplace on the commercially-funded PBS broadcasters, who have websites devoted to information for potential sponsors. This is also the case for factual and documentary programming. Honda sponsors Channel 4's documentaries and its food programmes are sponsored by Tropicana and Alpro. Continental Tyres backed the travelogue *Paul Merton's India* on Five. Sponsorship obviously restricts the range of subjects that can be explored, as sponsors decide what subject matter in which they want to invest. In addition, it is difficult to safeguard credibility and notions of impartiality and balance, when a documentary is funded by political parties, NGOs, charities, or is sponsored by a business. As Nick Fraser has observed: 'If Dr Goebbels appeared with a huge sack of money, there would be documentary filmmakers queuing around the block to take it.' (Cox, 2009; Rushton, 2009)

Secondly, the rise in first person documentaries described, amongst others, by Jerslev (2004) and Dovey (2000) has been cemented and commercialised by documentaries fronted by celebrities or well-known reporters. Here the fame factor adds to the personal journey in an attempt to use name-recognition to draw in viewers. Thirdly, single docs still do exist, but there is little room for them in the TV schedules and few commissioning editors to whom producers can pitch such ideas and proposals, as the schedules are increasingly filled with documentary series, strands, themed nights and seasons designed to retain and ensure the return of viewers.

However, there are exceptions to the reductions in budgets. Simon Dickson, the then commissioning editor for Channel 4 documentaries, explained at the 'PBS in an Online Environment' panel at Sheffield Documentary Festival 2009:

Investment in documentaries is as much as can be afforded [...] A lot is said about budgets being cut, but for the right idea there is more money than there ever was. We're working very hard to pay a little less for the stuff we used to pay top dollar for, and more for the documentaries we believe will make big impact, like *The Family*.

In other words, there is a polarisation of budgets. At one end of the spectrum, there is the no- to low-budget documentary, while at the other there are the big-budget high profile documentary series or those that command feature film-size budgets. Documentary films which have commanded big budgets include the multi-rig documentary, like Channel 4's serialised remakes (2009, 2010 and 2011) of Paul Watson and Franc Roddam's seminal observational documentary series *The Family* (BBC, 1974); the interactive documentary series *Seven Days* (Channel 4, 2010) which was advertised as the next generation *Big Brother*; feature documentaries for cinematic release such as *Touching the Void* (Macdonald, 2003) or *Man on Wire* (Marsh,

2008); or blue-chip nature or history documentaries, like the BBC's *Blue Planet* (2003-2011) or *Life* (2009) which are used as channel profiling and aimed at the box-set market.

There is no doubt that durable budgets still exist for some documentaries, for example in the PBS broadcasters' dedicated documentary strands. But while the annual number of hours for documentaries on strands like Channel 4's *Cutting Edge*, *Unreported World* and *Dispatches* and the BBC's *Panorama* fluctuate, the average budget for documentary films in these strands has remained stable, and has thus declined in real terms. Moreover, across documentary output as a whole, as the above quotations and figures indicate, there has been a decline in budgets that do not fall into the big budget category. Increasingly, there is a polarisation of documentary financing in the UK documentary market that is suspended between no/low and big budgets.

Crowdsourcing and outsourcing

It is in this economic climate that the 'no to low budget' documentaries are moving online and documentary film producers are seeking to finance or secure additional funding for their films on the internet. This takes two forms. Documentary makers can either try to recoup investments already made by various forms of distribution online, or secure funding for their films prior to (or during) production. Obviously recoupment or upfront financing models are not mutually exclusive and many funding models combine both approaches.

Distribution

In the last decade there has been a revival of interest in documentary films attested to by the proliferation of documentary film festivals across the world, as well as the box office successes of feature documentaries such as *An Inconvenient Truth* (Guggenheim, 2006, US), *Touching the Void* (Macdonald, 2003, UK), *Supersize Me* (Spurlock, 2004, US) and the films of Michael Moore. This has both created and proved the viability of a secondary market for documentaries. Like cinemas and festivals, the internet is a perfect venue for accessing and viewing documentary films and this has fuelled a plethora of new documentary film portals, streaming and downloads sites, such as joiningthedocs.com, Vodo.net or the documentary sections and catalogues of subscription-based film rental and streaming services like lovefilm.com and Netflix.com. These sites allow documentary films to find new audiences globally and attract niche or special interest viewers.

The online 'backstage areas' of documentary festivals like the Sheffield International Documentary Festival allow delegates exclusive access to the back catalogue of the festival's films after it has ended. This relieves pressure on cinemateques and cinema seats during the festival itself and gives viewers a wider window in which to watch the officially selected films of the festival. TV stations' VOD services have also proved successful in generating additional audiences for TV documentaries either vosdal (Viewing-On-Same-Day-As-Live) or in the window after the transmission day for which they are available online. Less than 25% of documentary films have primetime slots (Ofcom, 2011: 19-35) and the availability, as well as time-shifting afforded by VOD, is significant. According to a survey in *Broadcast* magazine, documentary accounted for 15% of all VOD viewing in the first half of 2011, compared to an average of 7.3% for time-shifted viewing of all genres (Price, 2011). Nick Fraser observes that although the documentaries on BBC's *Storyville* strand rarely have large viewing figures when they are transmitted on BBC 4, they always do well on VOD and often figure in the top five shows viewed on iPlayer (Interview with Author). Both types of VOD allow audiences additional opportunities to see documentary content and thus act as a secondary market for the films.

Although the forms of distribution listed above are 'new' online ways of watching and distributing documentary, they rely on old distribution methods, structures and recoupment models. However, there are novel web-based ways of distributing films and recouping investment after their premiere. For example, the distribution site Vodo.net relies on P2P promotion on torrent tracker sites with links to either subscription-based access to Vodo.net's films or to pay-if-you-want funding schemes. Using Vodo.net's model, Jamie King advertised *Steal This Film II* (2007) on bit torrent sites with links to the film's own distribution site and pay-if-you-want scheme. Here, viewers can watch this film and a selection of others and pay what they think appropriate afterwards (the choice is either to pay nothing or a minimum of \$5 to cover administration costs and Paypal's charges). According to King, speaking at a panel on online documentary funding at the Sheffield Documentary Festival 2009, his film has grossed more than £30,000, which corresponds to a regional BBC budget for an independently-produced 30-minute documentary. A pay-if-you-want scheme was also used to distribute Bret Gaylor's *RIP! A Remix Manifesto* (2008), which was funded and made available in this manner by the Canadian Film Board.

Production funding

Recently, there has been a rise in documentary films that are financed online. Whereas the distribution models above often recoup revenue from content that has already been funded by broadcasters, the producers

themselves or other public or private financiers, these documentaries are funded and distributed online and then, in some cases, sold to the broadcasters, thus reversing the traditional funding chain. Accordingly, there has been a buzz around concepts like crowdfunding and crowd investment in the press, on film blogs and at documentary festivals.

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is essentially the micro-financing of individual projects and is catered for online by sites like indiegogo.com, sponse.com, crowdfunder.co.uk, pledgie.com and Kickstarter.com. These sites enable projects to build communities and hone and gather funding pledges from individual sponsors. Crowdfunding sites are not specifically for film projects, but are used by filmmakers to finance production as well as distribution. Each site operates slightly differently, but the principle can be exemplified by Kickstarter, which is the current site of choice for filmmakers. Kickstarter allows producers to advertise their projects by featuring the project's trailer, pitch and pledge to produce/distribute the film, if they raise set sum, decided at the outset, in one month. Supporters then pledge to donate individual sums. Generally the larger the contribution supporters make, the more privileges they get. For example, a £50 pledge might get a supporter a DVD of the film, a £100 pledge a signed poster and DVD, for £500 an invite to the premiere and an end credit, etc. If the project reaches the full amount of funding, each supporter's donation is deducted from their accounts through Paypal. If it fails, the pledge is void. Other sites, for example indiegogo.com and sponse.com, pay out the amount raised regardless if the initial sum has been reached.

Crowd investment

In perhaps the world's most famous example of crowd investment, Franny Armstrong raised £900,000 for the documentary feature *The Age of Stupid*. The film is a critique of today's climate politics and features Peter Postlethwaite as the sole survivor of a future eco-disaster, looking back at TV footage of the climate issues that faced the world in 2009 and musing that had politicians acted, the world and humanity would have been saved.

The finance for *The Age of Stupid* was raised through selling shares of £500 in the film prior to and during its production in turn for a percentage of the profits of the film annually over ten years. Although the film has yet to make a profit, investors have recouped their initial investment. Armstrong's shares scheme did not start online,

because the project was initially kept secret as Armstrong wanted to film undercover. However, once the filming was underway, the internet hugely facilitated the coordination and organisation of the crowd investment effort. Raising private investment for individual films is an established documentary practice described by, for example, Emile de Antonio and Anand Patwardhan in Jane Chapman's *Documentary in Practice* (2007, pp. 26-28). However, the internet makes this process easier and also affords new ways of involving and interacting with individual sponsors, a point I shall return to.

Franny Armstrong also used the internet to distribute *The Age of Stupid*. Half the film's budget was used for the production of the film and the other for its promotion and distribution. The film's premiere, attended by Postlethwaite and the then Climate Minister Ed Milliband, was held in an inflatable eco-sustainable cinema in Leicester Square in the centre of London and generated considerable press coverage. Afterwards, the distribution of the film was done entirely online. On the website of Armstrong's production company Spanner Films, distributors, exhibitors, interested parties, groups and individuals can buy a licence to screen the film. The film can then be downloaded or streamed live via using Spanner Film's own software and these screenings can be complemented by live streamed link-ups so that the filmmakers can attend virtual Q&A's. In this way much of the exhibition took the form of events, centred around and organised by communities active in the climate debate. Today, the film has been seen by over 40 million people, has aired on TV stations across the world and is now available on DVD, streamed online and through iTunes.

Perspectives on online funding and distribution

Thus, the online distribution model works along the principles of Chris Anderson's long tail economy (2006) and online financing models are based on micro-financing and investment in shares. Both can be seen as viable additions to the upfront financing and distribution of the British broadcasters' commissioning system. However, although online funding systems outside the commissioning process of the broadcasters are often hailed as advantageous to filmmakers, online financing is not unproblematic and there are serious implications for documentary films and their producers, as the following cases will show.

Editorial control and rights to the film

Online funding allows producers to create films out with the broadcasters' commissioning process and the involvement of the broadcasters' commissioning editors and executives. This gives editorial and creative

freedom to the filmmaker. This can be difficult to maintain when a project is fully financed by and contractually tied to a broadcaster, because the broadcaster's commissioning editor will typically also act as an executive producer and potentially have significant say in the editorial of the film. However, this freedom is hard-earned and puts new pressures on filmmakers. Funding online enables the filmmaker to retain the rights to the film and thus the right and ability to exploit secondary markets. Conversely, although the producer's rights to the film are insured as part of PACT's terms of trade, when a film is funded by TV broadcasters and going through their funding models and commissioning systems, it is, in reality, hard for smaller independent filmmakers to implement these terms and retain rights, as both trade press reports (Kanter, 2011a) and documentary filmmakers Marie Olesen and Franny Armstrong attest (interviews with author). However, one of the benefits of a commission from broadcasters is that they also come with departments for promotion and distributing films - roles that the self-financed documentary-maker has to fulfil him- or herself. Armstrong describes her role in the making of *The Age of Stupid* as 'documentary-maker, PR person, saleswoman, fundraiser, public speaker and distributor' (ibid.). While a talented documentary maker can make a film, not everyone has the will, clout, skills, time or business sense to promote it.

Although it is possible for the individual producer or production house to retain rights, within the existing audiovisual market in the UK, the effective and dominant distribution channels remain with the established broadcasters, brands and outfits. Their means of delivering content are underpinned by and supports the existing distribution models: on the one hand, the DVD rental and streaming sites, Netflix and Lovefilm (the merging of the DVD rental sites of the Guardian newspaper and Amazon) and, on the other, the VOD services and distribution arms of the established TV channels.

Crowdsourcing as community building and promotion

Although online financing models are much-hyped, they are by no means always successful in ensuring production funding or distribution. While online financing forms operate outside the gatekeeping of the broadcasters, the mechanism of gatekeeping is still at play. For crowdsourcing schemes in which supporters have to decide whether to invest, the subject of the film – its cause - plays a part, but so does name recognition.

Franny Armstrong describes *The Age of Stupid* as the world's most successful crowd investment project and attributes this to three things:

We had three factors that were really important for us. One was the subject: climate change. We started in 2004, pre-*Inconvenient Truth*, when it wasn't so mainstream. So the idea that a film was going to come along and make that jump, a lot of people really wanted to be part of that. Number two was me, because I'd made films like *McLibel* in the past, that all these people had seen and had a lot of respect for. [They knew] that it was not going to be a sell-out, that it was going to be rigorous criticism. And the third factor was John Battsek who was our executive producer. He's won an Oscar and gave it a glamorous edge. So, I think people were thinking: 'Well, it could be another one of them.' (Interview with Author.)

In August 2011, two feature documentaries appeared on Kickstarter. Both projects appealed for \$30,000 to distribute and take their films to market, and both were promoted and pushed heavily on social network sites, in the press and through Kickstarter's updates. Both directors were British and both production teams had made award-winning films for UK TV broadcasters. Both films followed personal journeys to explore contemporary political issues. In *Sarah Palin: You Betcha!*, Nick Broomfield wanted to uncover the homelands of Sarah Palin prior to the start of the 2012 US election campaign. *Minefield – a film about War, Football and Friendship* followed soccer coach Scotty Lee, who promotes reconciliation through football training with children in Iraq, and examined the allied forces' involvement in the reconstruction effort and impact on civilians. Only Nick Broomfield's film reached its target of \$30,000. Thus, although both projects had similar experiential surplus value, which Belleflamme et al. describe as necessary to attract investors to a crowdfunding project (Belleflamme, et al., 2011), crowd-financing is not a certain funding avenue for every worthwhile project. It is likely that the fact that Nick Broomfield and Sarah Palin are immediately recognisable names contributed to that film's funding success, as was the case with *The Age of Stupid*.

It may be useful to view the fact that a film is crowdfunded as much as a part of the film's promotion as it is of its funding strategy. Belleflamme et al. suggest that crowdfunding should be seen as a broader concept that affords ways to develop and test drive corporate activities around the project (ibid.) and, to follow John Caldwell, the secondary text, the 'making of' or 'crowdfunding' story of, for example, *The Age of Stupid* is as much part of the making sense of, message and mythology surrounding the film as the primary text itself (2006): *The Age of Stupid* is as famous for its financing scheme as it is as a film. Similarly, the Danish director Frank Piasecki Poulsen's *Blood in the Mobile* attempted to raise the final 10% of its budget through a Facebook-promoted crowd-financing scheme on pledie.com. During the production of the feature, Poulsen promoted the crowd-financing aspect of his film at panels at various documentary festivals, such as Sunnyside of the Doc and the Sheffield Documentary Festival 2009. With a budget of 3.6 million Danish kroner secured from the Danish Film Institute, Danida, MEDIA, DR, WDR, YLE, NRK (Norway), DUNA TV (Hungary), ERT (Greece) and TG4

(Ireland), it seems fair to assume that the crowd-financing aspect had as much to do with the promotion of the film and building a community around the documentary and its cause, as it did with its financing.

Online financing: a certain kind of documentary

Although online funding is often seen as a way to bolster any production budget, certain types of documentary lend themselves to online financing. First, relying on a community for funding and distribution lends itself to certain subject matter. Supporters are not only financially supporting a film, but also its cause. Thus crowdfunding and crowd investment schemes usually attract campaigning and issue-led films. The financial aspect is not the only benefit of crowd investment and crowdfunding schemes, and building a community plays a huge part both in promotion and the production and distribution processes²⁶. Both Armstong and Poulsen used their networks and Facebook to promote their films, post updates on the production process and advertise screening and events after the release of the films. These are well-established activist film-making practices, and Christian Christiansen has documented the importance of building a community in the campaigning and issue-based films of Brave New Films (op.cit).

Secondly, the long tail economics of online distribution (Anderson, 2006) all but precludes films with high start-up costs. Broadcaster backing and the upfront and fully-funded commissions that are the norm in the UK are necessary to produce, for example, long-form observational documentary films, drama-documentaries, high-spec nature and history films, undercover investigations and other films that require high-level institutional legal backing.

This not only affects the types of documentaries made, it also potentially creates a situation where editorial attributes traditionally associated with documentary are challenged by their online counterparts. In the UK, journalistic standards of balance, impartiality and objectivity are safeguarded internally by the TV channels' Producer Guidelines and compliance, to which all productions must contractually and ethically adhere, and externally by the legislation and regulations enforced by Ofcom. Online there are no such guidelines. As a consequence conspiracy theories or documentaries presenting alternative viewpoints, which cannot find a place

²⁶ Although it is not the focus of this article, the importance of community should not be underestimated or reduced to financing only. For supporters, donations can be seen as much as a statement of support for the film and its cause as a financial pledge and investment in it. Also, in production processes where the documentary-maker is fulfilling a number of different roles and often, by and large, works by him- or herself, the community can be an inspiration and source of practical help, as well as a financial resource. Franny Armstrong drew both moral and practical support from her community of investors, who provided encouragement and donated, for example, the use of a recording studio and a country cottage during the writing process.

in the mainstream TV schedules, flourish online, one example being *Loose Change* (Avery, 2005--9) about the White House's alleged involvement in the 9/11 attacks. In online documentaries it is not always obvious who the producer is or what their agendas are, and the facts presented in these films are impossible to verify, check or hold anyone accountable for.

The broadcasters - Outsourcing production and risk

Explaining the relationship between media conglomerates and niche producers, Klaus Bruhn Jensen links convergence to divergence of media use and outsourcing (2008, pp. 115-116). Online financing forms and the ability to produce documentaries parallel to the broadcasters' commissioning structures offer new opportunities for documentary producers. It also benefits the broadcasters. While broadcasters relinquish initial editorial control in the production process, they have access to many more, readymade films, streamed online and shown at festivals, than they could possibly commission themselves. These documentaries have already been produced and thus there are no economic or editorial risks involved in the production process for the broadcasters. The end result is that the broadcasters' buyers have a huge catalogue of documentaries to choose from – and always at a fraction of the amount it would cost to co-produce or finance the film²⁷.

Cheaper, more accessible technology has lowered the entry barriers for documentary-makers. Today, it is possible for anyone to make and try to promote a film online. However, access does not equal ability, as Franny Armstrong points out:

Yes, the internet is democratising in that sense that the cheap equipment is democratising. But just because a football is cheap and anyone can kick one around, it doesn't mean that everybody is Ronaldo. And so there's a lot of crap films too (op.cit).

Online documentaries that come to prominence are, as illustrated above, either backed by established media organisations, promoted in the press or have the name recognition and marks of distinction to rise to the surface.

Existing and traditional institutional parameters and taste hierarchies may not solely decide what is being produced, but they are certainly determining factors in what is promoted, is widely available and thus most widely viewed. TV is still the platform that reaches the most viewers in the UK. Cinema premieres and selection at

²⁷ Franny Armstrong is contractually obliged not to disclose how much the BBC paid to screen The Age of Stupid.

festivals are still important for the success of a film, not only as mark of acceptance into the cultural taste hierarchies, but also in terms of the promotion and advertising for the film. Institutional recognition as well as a track record and name recognition are thus important factors for the financial and critical success of documentary films. This is also the case for films funded and distributed online. Although crowdfunding and crowd investment ventures and online distribution schemes are often perceived as level playing fields with no or low entry barriers, it is not only the material capital, but very much also the cultural capital that a project is able to accumulate which determines whether a film receives funding in the first place and, subsequently, reaches a significant audience. And, as the crowd investment and funding cases of Armstrong and Broomfield show, name recognition and track record are important factors when crowdfunders decide whether to contribute to a film, just as they are when festivals select films or TV broadcasters decide what documentaries to buy and air.

Conclusion

Online funding models for documentary films are a relatively new phenomenon. But with the success of the distribution of documentary films online and as funding of documentary films becomes more commonplace, the internet could well prove itself to be a(nother) natural home for documentaries, or at least be a platform and funding avenue that exists alongside the documentary film production industry sustained by the broadcasters. This shift in the way films are financed and made in the UK carries with it new complexities for the documentary industry and, especially, for the documentary producers. It also has implications for the types of films made, the subjects they can explore and the way they are produced.

Although online funding methods are establishing themselves as alternatives to traditional financing models, and are certainly hyped as such at festivals and in the press, the gatekeeping mechanisms are still in place, albeit in an institutional as well as Bourdieuan incarnation. Indeed, it is hard to determine if aesthetic and editorial preferences have been established institutionally and passed on to the crowd online, or the gatekeeping function of the institutions were always a physical manifestation of taste hierarchies in society. But, the self-regulation of 'crowd commissions' online seems to suggest that gatekeeping can no longer be seen as a concept confined to an institutional context.

Size, name and brand recognition matter. Broadcasters, superindies and brands that have the clout to use their names to gain competitive advantage by diversifying diagonally and cross-promoting can dominate the market.

Although the right to the airwaves is no longer confined to TV broadcasters, it is the conglomerates rather than new entrants that are dominating the audiovisual market online.

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Sørensen, I. Channels as Content Curators. Multiplatform Strategies for Documentary Film and Factual Content in British Public Service Broadcasting. (In review).

Article 2 Channels as Content Curators. Multiplatform Strategies for Documentary Film and Factual Content in British Public Service Broadcasting

Abstract (150 words)

Today, sites and portals specializing in streaming long-form documentary and factual content are proliferating online. To compete, established TV broadcasters are consolidating their web presences and increasing documentary output across media platforms.

Through interviews with fourteen executives, producers and commissioners from the UK documentary industry, this paper will explore how British TV broadcasters seek to reinvent themselves as curators of documentary content online, in order to secure and bolster their positions as leading providers of documentary and factual content across platforms – as well as global cultural gatekeepers.

The paper will show that traditional media oligopolies are mirrored across platforms, but that also TV broadcasters' multiplatform strategies impact on traditional TV marketing, commissioning and scheduling. As broadcasters begin to operate like curators of multiplatform content, decisions about where documentaries are best distributed, viewed and interacted with as well as definitions of what documentary films is and can be, are being renegotiated.

Keywords

Curating documentary content, multiplatform strategies, verticals, two-screen programming, public service media.

Introduction

Before the advent of Web 2.0, the networked TV channels enjoyed a near monopoly on the commissioning and broadcast of news, documentary and current affairs programming in the United Kingdom²⁸. However, in an increasingly crowded market for audiovisual content, the established broadcasters are facing increased competition from a number of sides and sites, including the proliferation VOD sites streaming full-length and high-quality factual and documentary programmes; internet based webcasters and distribution platforms, devoted to the distribution and promotion of documentary as well as the recent resurgence of feature documentary for theatrical and VOD distribution. This article explores how Britain's two publically owned public service broadcasters, the BBC and Channel 4, are addressing the battle for platforms and audiences for documentary films and factual content in a multiplatform market, and in the process are repositioning themselves as public service media²⁹ providers.

Increasingly the terms curated sites and curated content are being used to describe the online practices and strategies of media companies in media industry parlance (interviews with author), its trade press (Kanter, 2011b) and academia (Buzzard, 2003; Lewandowski, forthcoming 2012). Taking inspiration from this notion of curation and following on from James Bennett's and Niki Strange's analyses of BBC's 'bundled projects' as multiplatform and branding strategies (Bennett & Strange, 2008), and with them John T Caldwell's second shift aesthetics as a scheduling strategy in a digital environment (Caldwell, 2003), this article will focus on the ways in which the BBC and Channel 4 are expanding their presence and brand across platforms in order to be not only commissioners, producers and schedulers of TV programmes, but also curators of documentary and factual content across platforms.

As documentary content migrates across platforms, production boundaries are redrawn and the traditional demarcations between the production and distribution sectors become blurred. Not surprisingly, this also has an impact on the ways TV channels commission, market and distribute their programmes. This article will explore

28 Competition for viewers is of course not new to the terrestrial channels in the UK. With the emergence of satellite and cable TV in the late 1970s and 1980s, and the ensuing proliferation of digital channels in the 1990s, terrestrial TV is well used to competition for viewers. However the five terrestrial channels in the UK commission the vast majority of primary programmes in the UK, 85% in 2006 and 79% in 2008 according to PACT (PACT, 2009). Also, in a state-run licensed broadcast system like the UK, competition was fairly easy to police, licence and regulate which has limited the number of new channels in Britain and up until recently, the technological requirements, expertise and hardware to broadcast high quality audiovisual content were almost exclusively in the hands of the TV broadcasters.

29 'Public service media' rather than Public Service Broadcasting is a term commonly used within the industry (for example in author's interviews with Stuart Cosgrove, Neil McDonald and Lucy Wilson) as well as being suggested by Karol Jacubowicz and Niki Strange (Strange, 2011, p. and Jacubowicz as quoted in Strange p. 136)

this process from the perspective of the British public service TV channels. It will look at the way these organisations see their changing roles and investigate some of the scheduling and production strategies and practices that they are developing to manage audience and user flow between platforms and thereby orchestrate the interaction between on-air and online content. These include curating themed online portals (Channel 4's so-called 'verticals') and two-screen programming strategies. This article will also argue that as broadcasters begin to operate as curators of multiplatform content, and as the role and processes of the broadcasters and their commissioning editors change, the definitions of what documentary film is and can be, will also be renegotiated.

Methods and rationale

Through industry analysis and fourteen semi-structured interviews with independent producers, multiplatform executives, documentary strand editors and commissioning editors working within the British TV industry, this article will explore some of the explicit and implicit strategies that the traditional networked broadcasters are adopting as they seek to reinvent and reposition themselves as multimedia and multiplatform institutions, in order to fulfil public service remits, secure and bolster their positions as leading providers of documentary and factual content across platforms, as well as to maintain their positions as global cultural gatekeepers.

The interviews were conducted between 2009 and 2011 and set out to uncover multiplatform commissioning, scheduling and broadcasting strategies in the documentary and factual departments of British TV broadcasters. Curation came up as a recurring theme in these interviews but was not the only topic explored. To insure reliability, the interviews are cross-referenced with other interviewees, data from Ofcom³⁰ as well as announcements, updates and interviews in *Broadcast*³¹ and commissioning briefings on the TV channels' own websites. They are also supported by an analysis of the channels' recent factual and documentary output on TV and online.

This article focuses primarily on the BBC and Channel 4. Both these networks have public service remits to commission and broadcast documentary and factual content and the majority of documentaries in the UK³² can be found on these two channels. Furthermore, both of these broadcasters use documentary as one of the main broadcast genres with which to promote themselves, differentiate themselves from their competitors and to

30 Ofcom, the Office of Communications, is the independent regulator and competition authority of the broadcast and telecommunications industries in the UK.

31 The UK TV industry weekly trade publication.

32 The BBC is publicly funded by the licence fee and revenue from its commercial arm BBC Worldwide. Channel 4 is publicly owned but commercial funded through sponsorship and advertising revenue.

demonstrate their commitment to serious programming. This in turn helps to justify their place in the UK mediascape, which means for the BBC, securing continued funding through the license fee, and for Channel 4, justifying their unique status as a publicly owned, but commercially-funded public service broadcaster with not-for-profit status. It should also be noted that the BBC is the largest single producer and exporter of documentary film and factual content in the world while the UK industry is the second largest exporter of audiovisual content behind the US (Steemers, 2004). Moreover, in a multiplatform context the BBC and Channel 4 have the largest online presence in the UK through bbc.co.uk and channel4.com. They also pioneered broadcaster-hosted VOD in the UK through Channel 4's 4oD and BBC's iPlayer, which launched in November 2006 and December 2007 respectively. Both channels have public service remits to engage with new digital platforms, services and technologies (BBC, 2012), while Channel 4 has a specific requirement to produce content, and especially news and current affairs, across platforms as stated in the Digital Economy Bill 2010 (Channel4, 2012). These differences in remit have informed the perspectives of this paper. The case studies from the BBC focus on how documentary commissioners seek to optimise viewing figures for TV documentaries on VOD and online, whereas the analysis of Channel 4 centres on how documentary content is integrated into the channel's multiplatform presence.

From commissioners and creators of programmes to curators of content

In recent years the introduction of affordable, accessible and user-friendly production equipment and editing tools, as well as the ability to up- and download audiovisual material online, have made documentary less expensive and easier to produce and broadcast for professional and amateur producers alike. Documentary films migrate with ease between platforms and flourish both inside and outside the domain of the terrestrial broadcasters. Much critical attention has focused on the blurring of the borders between producers, users and broadcasters; the merits of user generated content (UGC) and video sharing sites; as well as the potential for a democratisation of the production process and access to media outlets (Bruns, 2007; Burgess & Green, 2009; Nick Couldry, 2010; Nick Couldry, 2010; Gaunt, 2009; Jenkins, 2006; Steemers, 2004, pp. 33, 123 & 160). However, the real challenge to the established broadcasters position came with increases in bandwidth and exploded in 2006 with the arrival of YouTube, Vimeo and other similar delivery platforms for audiovisual content, which invite everyone to produce and, as YouTube's tagline goes, 'broadcast yourself' (Burgess & Green, 2009).

So far TV broadcasters have maintained their position as the preeminent medium that consistently attracts the most viewers to their TV programmes. This is partly due to their established position and brand recognition in the media landscape and the audiovisual market, and partly because of their experience and expertise in

commissioning, creating and broadcasting high-quality programmes. It is also because TV stations and channels function like curators of a specific types of high-quality programmes, whereas is difficult for viewers to navigate the morass of audiovisual content on other platforms. Given the vast amount of audiovisual content uploaded to the internet every day – 60 hours of video content is uploaded every minute to YouTube alone³³ – the problem for viewers is not so much accessing audiovisual material as identifying high quality content online. This problem is exacerbated by the limitations of text-centric search engines and a corresponding lack of metadata accompanying audiovisual content (Cha, Kwak, Rodriguez, Ahn, & Moon, 2007, 2009; Greenaway, Thelwall, & Ding, 2009).

In a paper delivered at the Media Education Summit 09, Michael Wesch applied Neil Postman's reflections on George Orwell's *1984* in *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1989) to TV and social networks today. Wesch argues that the problem facing audiovisual culture is not the Orwellian vision of information being deemed so dangerous that it has to be banned or burnt, but the Huxleyian one where there is no need to: the noise and mass of information drowns out itself and everything that surrounds it. In a world with an overwhelming abundance of audiovisual media, it difficult to tell information from misinformation, propaganda from news, quality from non-quality. Wesch sees social networks as a means of breaking with mass media and the indifference and incoherence it creates, and reconnecting on a peer-to-peer level (2009). Stuart Cosgrove, Channel 4's Director of Creative Diversity points to precisely the mass of content online as one of the key problems of the web, as well as the TV channels' competitive edge and advantage:

People like to imagine that the web is killing television...television will still have massive power because its greatest power is to curate and brand and commission as much as to distribute and circulate...So, there's quite a lot of the stuff that people haven't got curating right in, commissioning right in, choosing of images right. So I'm not a big fan of the idea of 'Poor old telly, it's dead, isn't it?' because there's quite a lot of things that TV does really well that the web's piss at. One of them is documentaries. (Interview with author, April 2010).

YouTube, Cosgrove elaborates, is innovative because it allows anyone to upload and broadcast content. The only criterion for uploaded content is its legal status. If content infringes on copyright, incites to illegal activity or receives complaints, it is taken down. In any other respect YouTube is neutral to values, notions of taste, quality or distinction. It does not have the same curatorial or editorial gatekeeping function as a television channel does,

33 Source: YouTube's online fact sheet, http://www.YouTube.com/t/press_statistics, accessed May 2012.

and with it the credibility and notion of quality that attracts viewers and users to it. He continues: 'And that's the big, big problem that the web has singularly failed to address: that television channels because of their scarcity were fantastic at curating and branding content and directing people to it.' (Ibid.)

However, today, with the rise of sites that specialise in documentary content, P2P reviews and recommendations, collaborative tagging, aggregation apps and Chris Anderson's (quite possibly exaggerated) announcement of the death of the web, it is becoming increasingly easy to find high quality, full-length audiovisual content online. In Chris Anderson and Michael Wolff's words, contemporary, online culture is 'less about the searching and more about the getting.' (2010) Indeed, on a production and an industry level, new content producers, distributors and providers are proliferating. And they are not only creating content, they are also trespassing on the TV industry's turf by distributing and broadcasting this content on their own sites and online channels. Commissioning, broadcasting and taking editorial charge of audiovisual content is precisely what TV stations do, and when outside organisations and sites start to adopt this role, it presents a fundamental challenge to role of the TV channels in the mediascape. It is within this context, that the BBC and Channel 4 are drawing on their experience as editors and commissioners of audiovisual content as they extend their reputations and brands across platforms – and take on the role of curators of content.

New documentary portals and players online

In addition to the shorter documentary and factual content available on YouTube, Dailymotion, Vimeo and similar sites, increases in bandwidth mean that high-quality, long-form documentaries are increasingly becoming available online³⁴ on websites and portals. A brief summary of the types of portals and sites that stream or allow legal downloads of documentary films illustrates this:

- Networked TV channels' own VOD platforms, such as the BBC's iPlayer, ITV's ITV Player, Five's Demand 5 and Channel 4's 4oD that stream programs after they have been transmitted on TV. These are free to use but only available for users in the UK only. The recently launched content aggregation site youview.com will compile and stream content from the four terrestrial broadcasters in the UK (BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Five), supported by the telecom companies Arqiva, TalkTalk and BT. YouView was approved by Ofcom on the 19th of October 2010 and will launch in the summer of 2012.

34 On YouTube one can of course find ripped and pirated documentary films both full-length and in instalments, something veteran documentary maker Roger Graef calls a 'perverse compliment' (2010).

- Pay-per-view or subscription-funded sites like Netflix.co.uk, blinkbox.co.uk, and lovefilms.com have documentary libraries, as does the Skyplayer.
- www.joiningthedocs.tv is an example of a webportal dedicated to documentary film. Similarly the online TV station, current.tv streams short form teasers for documentary and current affairs programmes that are broadcasted in full length on subscription based cable channels.
- Ad-funded content aggregation IPTV sites such as the now defunct Seesaw and Joost have not been successful in the UK, but this model clearly works as the success of the American channel Hulu, owned by NBC, Fox, CBS Nickeloden and ABC has shown.
- Exclusive documentary film sites hosted by festivals, for example, the Sheffield International Documentary Festival's post-festival documentary screening site, which allows delegates to access a large part of the festivals' back catalogue online.
- Independent film and filmmakers' sites. These can be set up to support, stream and/ or distribute a single film ([www.stealthisfilm](http://www.stealthisfilm.com)), a collection of films (www.interviewproject.com), the collected works of a filmmaker (www.stealthisfilm.com), the films of a cooperative (www.vodo.net), or a production company (www.spannerfilms.co.uk).
- National film sites like the Canadian Film Board (www.nfb.com) and national educational resource sites that stream films from their national film archives, for example, the British www.bfi.org.uk/creativearchive and the Scottish site www.scolandonscreen.org.uk.
- NGO and charity websites.

The organisations behind these sites are, perhaps unsurprisingly, long-established media and campaigning institutions that have a history of, and expertise in, delivering high-quality audiovisual content. It is worth noting that these organisations for the most part do not set out to reinvent documentary form or subgenres but rather re-mediate traditional types of documentary film and content across platforms. It is predominantly the existing TV and theatrical documentary forms, rather than new crossplatform hybrids that are posted on these sites. Like the TV channels, these sites act as curators for documentary content online and provide brand security for viewers, visitors and documentary producers. To be a successful site, it is thus not just the ability to produce or deliver documentary content that matters, but the ability to vouch for its quality. This mirrors and reinforces online the institutional oligopolies that existed and continue to exist in the established networked mediascape.

TV channels and their multiplatform theories and strategies

It is not only established media hegemonies and traditional genre conventions and aesthetics that are replicated online. In *Net Ratings: Defining a New Media by the Old*, Karen Buzzard observes that the economic models employed by TV stations are also transferred to online industries. In the same way as programmes on commercial TV stations deliver viewers or consumers to advertisers, online advertising 'monetizes' by honing eyeballs on sites through monopoly-like portals (2003, p. 198). Buzzard writes: 'Apparently the future will be determined by those who control the first screen to be seen on whatever user device the future is tuned in (i.e. computer, TV or some combination thereof)' (Ibid. 206) She notes that these points of entry are increasingly concentrated and controlled by fewer media players. She writes:

Studies indicate that the same gigantism that afflicts the old media now dominates the new. Despite the internet's myth of indestructible diversity, cyberspace is also vulnerable to monopolistic tendencies....These companies now steer visitors to sites they co-own or cross-promote. Mergers and marriages have whittled down the field while the evaporating dot.coms have forced weaker sites to close. Although anyone can still get online, having a powerful voice once you get there is becoming a different matter. (Ibid., p 207)

It is in this light that TV channels are seeking to make their presence felt online and to ensure that their channel or homepage remains the first point of call. In the UK, bbc.co.uk is already one of these sites, and has remained number eleven since 2010, while its VOD service the iPlayer has risen to number fifteen today (Hitwise, 2012). Globally bbc.co.uk is in decline and fell from number 22nd in October 2010 to the 48th most-visited global website in the beginning of December 2012 (Google, 2012). With a specific remit to be innovative, experimental and distinctive across television, film and digital media, as well as to promote and experiment with digital content as stated in the 2010 Digital Economy Act, Channel 4 aspires to have a significant online and digital presence in the UK. Moreover, it is not only the channels' overall brands that are important entities; programmes and commissioning strands are now regarded as brands in themselves. John Smith, Chief Executive of the BBC's commercial arm, BBC Worldwide, describes the company's main activity as 'brand management' and notes that half of its £884 million revenue comes from just twelve brands, including *Doctor Who*, *Dancing with The Stars* and *Top Gear* (Kanter, 2011b). This in part explains the thinking behind the BBC's and Channels 4's multiplatform strategies, as I will return to later.

In his article *Second-Shift Media Aesthetics. Programming, Interactivity and User Flows*, John T. Caldwell argues that digital technology has brought about a 'second shift aesthetics' in the programming and scheduling

strategies of TV channels. The 'first shift' were pre-digital and based on long-established strategies employed by TV channels to retain audiences, for example counter programming or 'hammocking' and 'tent-poling' (i.e. scheduling a programme that attracts less viewers between two that do, or a transmitting popular programmes between two less well-liked), and organising viewing patterns in blocks depending on typical activities throughout the day. In academia, this shift inspired Raymond Williams' flow theory and Nick Brown's thinking on 'supertext' (i.e. the ads, idents, etc that surround programs), and provided the methodological framework for considering the context and the socio-economical aspects of the TV industry, as an integral part of the programme. Digitisation however challenges the fundamental institutional logic of analogue TV and prevents programmers from organising programming flows around linear, sequential viewing patterns. Instead it brings a 'new form of rationality to unstable media economies' (2003, p. 135) and creates programming and scheduling practices that are 'rationalized around new forms of textual dispersal, reaggregating flows and temporal seriality' (Ibid. 142-143).

The BBC and Channel 4 have different, if related, multiplatform strategies when it comes to factual and documentary programming and content; however, both are examples of 'second shift' aesthetics, and the control and management of user flows amongst digital, dispersed texts on- and offline. These revolve around the broadcasters setting themselves up as curators of documentary content hubs online, branding certain types of content, and controlling user flows and revenue streams between content. In these ways they seek to maintain their gatekeeping role as the leading providers of factual content. The ways in which these strategies manifest themselves have an impact on the types of documentaries commissioned and the ways they are promoted.

Channel 4 – meeting audiences where they are and verticals

In 2010 Channel 4 underwent a rebranding exercise from Channel 4 to simply 4. This could be seen as the integration of aesthetics and graphics online and on TV, and is perhaps most evident in the rebranding of the Channel 4 News idents in January 2010 that emphasized the multiplatform nature and omnipresence of its news coverage¹. Here the same font and graphics as the interface of the Channel 4 News site, references to web aesthetics and touch-screen technology permeate the graphics at Channel 4 News studios. Viewers are guided through the theme of each news story by a navigation bar, divided into sections: 'UK', 'World,' 'Business' 'Culture' and 'Sport' which enlarges and folds out as if clicked on. The opening titles are a Camtasia/Snagit style 'web surf' through a series of screens and layered frames, some featuring live footage, others screengrabs of the Channel 4 news website's pages, which all helps to create a sense of fluency between platforms. The surf ends

as the screens slide aside to reveal the studio, which itself is transparent. Its walls are floor to ceiling glass panels, while the surfaces of the furniture are glass and chrome. As these surfaces and interfaces mirror each other, so too the inside world of the studio reflects upon the outside world. It is impossible to say what is inside or outside the studio, or what is TV, internet or reflections of TV and internet. Viewers are invited to visit the website for more background to news stories and full-length interviews, to follow the main anchor Jon Snow on twitter or on his 'Snowblog'. Since there is no barrier between the producers of the news coverage and the world, the message of the site seems to be that everyone can take part and interact with Channel 4 News. There is no difference between platforms and news delivered online, on TV and through tweets, nor between the journalist and the viewers: there is nothing blocking our view of the world.

Channel 4 scheduling and programming strategies were overhauled at the same time. One approach has been to 'program for attention', as former Head of Crossplatform Matt Locke describes it, and follow users and viewers across platforms and engage with them on social networks. Stuart Cosgrove explains:

Channel 4 has a strategy to commission for its audience where it is, rather than commission for a television program...If it's the case that Facebook groups are very virulent in certain areas, then you're looking to bring those groups back to your channel experience, by offering them things like events, sneak previews, things that have never been transmitted before, follow-ups, specials - a whole set of things like that, that actually bring that group of people through their social network back into your network. Or, that your network goes to their network. ...So we actively use the social networks much more aggressively than any other broadcaster in order to make sure that happens (Op.cit.).

Following the viewers is one example of the ways user flows are rationalized and eyeballs gathered. In line with this, in October 2009, Channel 4 became the first TV station to strike a deal with Google to set up a separate and independent channel on YouTube, which launched in the beginning of 2010. Here, the content of Channel 4's VOD service 4OD as well as programs from the channel's archive are available for UK viewers. The programs are full-length, free-of-charge and supported by advertising revenues shared between Channel 4 and YouTube.

Another intertwining, 'second shift' approach is to commission, schedule and host content around what Channel 4 calls 'verticals.' Verticals are themed portals online where the channel can aggregate content in order to give the user a richer experience. Some verticals aggregate according to genres, and as such 4News can be seen as a vertical in the same way as comedy, drama and documentary. Other verticals are structured around the aggregation of themed content and feature programmes, apps and web content that Channel 4 has

commissioned, as well as related and associated content from other producers and suppliers. The verticals represent the channel's core areas of interest and priority, where in Cosgrove's words, the channel has 'clustered reputations' and serve to convert 'the TV viewer into a web consumer' (Interview with Author):

4Food would be a vertical. In other words it's a vertical portal on the web where if you're interested in food, you can find all this stuff, recipes and Jamie Oliver's in there and Gordon Ramsay's in there and if they are not on air, then there's this new show coming on air... but we have to put things on these verticals that aren't just simply episodes on the programme... things that will bring people back to the web, because they need the web in order to access information. ...And the reason that we do that is not only because it aggregates all this stuff that's otherwise incoherent as programme titles, [it] brings it under a banner if you like, a 4 Network banner.

Verticals are a way of aggregating content and curating material without necessarily owning or funding it all. As Cosgrove elaborates:

The other reason we do it is that we don't and can't own the rights to control all of those various independent parties that form part of the vertical. So Jamie Oliver runs his own company and has his own talent relationship with Sainsbury's, which we're not part of. So we don't want to necessarily build a Jamie Oliver website because, why would we do that, Jamie Oliver has his own company. He may or may not be with Channel 4 in two years' time, and he may or may not fall out with Sainsbury's. That's Jamie Oliver's worries. Our worry is how we make sure that our reputation for food doesn't stand or fall on whether Jamie Oliver's successful or not. So that's where you aggregate it into a vertical. (Op.cit)

Verticals do not only aggregate content, they also direct and hone user flows, as Cosgrove elaborates:

[verticals are] also bringing people in because they think that if they go to a website for a Jamie Oliver recipe, it's 4Food that they're in not jamieoliver.com. If they're in the Jamie Oliver site looking for the recipe and they stumble on a Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall recipe that they like better, that's the one they'll download. They'll not go, 'Oh, I'll not bother. I'll go to Jamie Oliver.com. They'll stay in that world.' (Ibid.)

Scheduling around verticals shifts the role of TV channels from that of commissioners of programmes to curators and hosts of content online. It also changes how the commissioning process of the TV channels works, and with it, how factual content and documentary are defined.

While some verticals, for example comedy and documentary aggregate content around genres, other verticals aggregate content around lifestyle themes, such as 4Food, 4Homes, 4Beauty. This marks an addition to and shift in the traditional commissioning structure. TV programs are still commissioned by the genre commissioning departments within the channels (Factual, Documentary, Drama, Comedy, News & Current Affairs etc), but a strategy based on verticals in a multiplatform context commands a commissioning structure with more cross-departmental collaboration and joint-commissioning decisions. This is also evidenced by the fact that Channel 4 now has an interdepartmental cross-platform team (interviews with Stuart Cosgrove and Matt Locke). And this in turn influences what is being commissioned. Programmes in certain genres become content of a certain type. When commissioning in a multiplatform context, 'documentary content', not the 'documentary' in itself matters. Niki Strange has also observed a similar shift in her analysis of the BBC's multiplatform strategy of 'bundled projects.' Between 2001 and 2006, and thus prior to articulating their 360 strategy in 2006, BBC pursued a strategy of 'bundling' related programmes and complimentary web content. Less comprehensive than verticals and in a pre-Web 2.0 context, bundled projects offered 'several complimentary products together or...additional services in a single 'package deal.' In this process, Strange observes, 'programmes' become 'projects' (2011).

Thus there is a shift in what is defined and perceived as a documentary. The documentary has long, if not always, undergone re-definitions and transformations brought about by economic, technical and structural changes to the media industry as explored by amongst others John Dovey (2000), Anne Jerslev (2004) and Paul Ward (2005). Verticals are just the latest stage in this process and bring with them wider definitions of what documentary films are and can be. Channel 4 is commercially funded, but with its public service remit, it has an obligation to commission and broadcast documentaries. However, verticals and with them documentary content, redefine not only the platforms on which documentary and factual content is shown, but also what counts as documentary. Freeing content from form, Stuart Cosgrove distinguishes between documentary content and people's perceptions of what a documentary should be:

So... there are more documentaries on Channel 4 now than there's ever been. They're just not what longitudinal filmmaking documentary people who want to win awards at festivals in Finland actually think documentaries should be, which is a slightly different issue, isn't it? Which is: Is there more documentary content on British television now than there was ten year ago? Answer: definitely yes. (Ibid.)

By moving away from 'longitudinal documentaries' and adapting a more flexible definition of what a documentary is and can be, Channel 4 is able to set up verticals online hubs comprising not only documentary and factual content but also other types of programming, games and entertainment. In doing so, the channel is effectively performing a land grab online, aggregating factual and documentary content, whether commissioned by the channel itself or provided by external providers, under the banners of themed '4' verticals. Verticals allow the channel to attract and tie viewers to its brand and become a one-stop shop for factual and documentary content aggregated around a specific topic.

Inevitably, this also affects traditional economic and advertising models and possible revenue streams for broadcasters. In her 2006 article *From Television to Multi-Platform. Less from More or More for Less?*, Gillian Doyle explored the online strategies of the UK TV channels and concluded that online platforms were not economically viable for the TV channels. Rather than being able to reap economies of scale by reusing and repurposing audiovisual content online, the necessary investment in manpower, technology and infrastructure cancelled out the economic benefit (Doyle, 2011). Today, more flexible software solutions and technology have reduced some of the costs involved in this process, as Doyle predicted they would. However, the real reason curating verticals makes economic sense is because it creates new revenue streams. For instance curating non-proprietary content such as content, apps and recipes from jamieoliver.com within a 4Food vertical, does not cost Channel 4 much since they do not have to produce or maintain the material, just the umbrella. At the same time user flow and design encourages users to stay on 4Food, rather than go to jamieoliver.com, and thus traffic and algorithmic advertising revenue stay with Channel 4, as Stuart Cosgrove's quote above revealed.

A similar way to bridge the gap between content on TV and online is two-screen programming which drives and hones audiences between platforms. According to Matt Locke, the former Head of Crossplatform at Channel 4, 60% of the Channel 4 audience is on another platform whilst watching the channel and therefore the focus is on making sure that users either stay within the content of the vertical by oscillating between platforms on and off line, or that they help generate traffic around the portal by sharing or tweeting about its content. Paul Woolf, head of development at Maverick TV, the company that delivers the vertical 4Beauty and produces the factual series *Embarrassing Bodies* and *Embarrassing Illnesses* says 'It's a shift from thinking of documentaries as artefacts that you interact with to thinking of documentaries as artefacts around which you do things.' Thus whilst watching, for example, the TV programme *Embarrassing Illnesses* on air, users are encouraged to access additional content, apps and information online, or even to engage in a face-to-face consultation with the programme's doctors via the cameras on their mobile, iPads or laptops, and then share this on their social networks. Thus while two-screen programming offers a deeper user experience, it also incentivises the audience

to stay within the content of a vertical or create hype around it, thereby increasing the advertising revenue generating potential.

BBC – documentary sanctuaries, events and niche casting

As a public service broadcaster funded through the license fee, the BBC's main motivation for its online entity bbc.co.uk is not to generate advertising revenue, but to provide a public service. Launching its first site in 1994, the BBC was one of the first broadcasters to build an online presence. However, in today's fiercely competitive, multichannel environment in the depths of a worldwide financial crisis, the BBC's license fee is viewed jealously by competitors and politicians, not least because the publicly funded bbc.co.uk is in direct competition with hard-pressed, commercial news services and factual sites. Indeed, in early 2010 the BBC announced a reduction of its online activities in anticipation of having to justify its online spend in the event of a Conservative party victory in the UK general election of May 2010.

The similarity between the BBC's' multiplatform strategies for managing user flows online and the experience of museum spaces is explored by James Bennett, who compares the organisation and orchestrations of the user journeys of the on- and offline content of the BBC's 'bundled project', *Walking with Beasts* to the 'organised walking' through natural history museum spaces (2007). Exploring some of the BBC's early multiplatform strategies in a later article, Bennett and Niki Strange argue that the practice of 'bundling' thematic and related content on- and offline is intended to keep 'audiences engaged with their proprietary content for as long as possible' as well as functioning as a branding exercise that 'plays a crucial role in providing a coherent identity across media platforms' (2008, p. 108 & 114). As such the BBC's practice of 'bundling projects' (which continued after and the instigation of '360' content commissioning in 2006), resembles an early incarnation of Channel 4's strategy of curating content within verticals. However, whereas Channel 4 is able monetise their own and non-proprietary content, the BBC as a publicly-funded broadcaster has a different agenda and set of priorities.

Bennett and Niki Strange dispel the notion that the public service broadcasters are at odds with multiplatform broadcasting as suggested by some researchers (Bennett, 2008, p. 277). They argue that through multiplatform interfaces and bundled projects, the BBC is able to extend its outreach, to fulfil its public service remit of universal provision and to 'Building Digital Britain', and to become a public service media provider (Bennett, 2008; Bennett & Strange, 2008; Strange, 2011). Migrating its archive online to create a portal for objective and politically neutral documentary content would further enhance this role (Bennett, 2008; Murdock, 2010).

Bennett and Strange' vision and thinking flourish on a practical level within the BBC. While the corporation has scaled down its overall investment in online content, the iPlayer in an increasingly important part of the network's online presence (Ofcom, 2011a). The iPlayer offers interesting insights into documentary viewing patterns, which have inspired series editor of the BBC documentary strand *Storyville*, Nick Fraser to see the internet as the beginning, rather than the end of documentary film. Documentaries in the *Storyville* strand air at various times – most often 21.00 or 22.00 - on BBC 2 and BBC 4 and do not normally receive large viewing figures, however , as Fraser reflects:

Storyville regularly appears in the first top five shows in terms of audience on the iPlayer. That means that there is a niche audience out there who knows how to use their computers and is actually going to the iPlayer in order to access Storyville documentaries and watch them....My policy by and large has been to separate off the documentaries within Storyville from considerations of the internet. I probably have a heretical view of the internet...[but] I think that long-term it's absolutely fascinating to see how this essential insight from the iPlayer can be either monetized or turned into a new form of public broadcasting and I am genuinely fascinated by the way it would be possible to make available documentaries for download throughout the world under the rubric of the BBC. ...And indeed it is unlikely to be successful unless it has the BBC brand behind it, because the BBC is a very important global brand (Interview with author).

Storyville is an international documentary strand with Fraser co-financing international documentaries (rather than commissioning and fully financing them) and his perspective is therefore international and collaborative. An online branded *Storyville* site under the BBC banner could increase viewing shares and take its films to a global audience. Current server restrictions prevent users outside the UK viewing content on the iPlayer (Quail, 2009), but Fraser believes that with a different streaming and distribution model BBC documentaries would command a worldwide niche audience, using much the same model as lovefilms.com or Netflix.com which both have documentary streaming and rental sections. In this event, the PSB brand could act as the unique selling point that sets its documentaries apart from films produced elsewhere. Fraser and his counterparts at public service broadcasters in other countries are therefore experimenting with building international PSB portals for documentary films such as www.whydemocracy.net and www.whypoverty.net :

Public Service Broadcasters should now combine and they should jointly create events, that give people reasons to watch blocks of documentaries [...] And the idea is just very simple, that you combine eight shows that have you have a properly organized website that you maximize the potential of each component of the event by putting them together in

a sort of creative and intelligent fashion. And that way you get big audiences ... that's the principle impact of the internet. (Ibid.)

www.whydemocracy.net and www.whypoverty.net are both able to reach a global audience beyond national borders. According to the www.whydemocracy.net site, the project is a 'documentary project using film to start a global conversation about *democracy*'. Jointly funded by the BBC, the Danish national broadcaster DR, the Danish film funding body DFI, ten international documentary makers were invited to produce films reflecting on the significance of democracy, which were then screened on TV and streamed on www.whydemocracy.net. This provided a global focal point around the theme of democracy. Today the films have aired on over 40 TV stations, from Al Arabia to BBC, while the site has the potential to reach an audience of 200 millions across the globe. www.whypoverty.net adopts a similar approach and hopes to reach 250 million viewers and air on 48 TV stations.

Fraser argues that rather than widening the definition of documentary to documentary content online, a Storyville site could raise the profile and quality of documentary films in the future:

... the real challenge posed by the internet to things like documentaries is that you have to be more ambitious, you have to combine more. There are so many two-minute sound bites available ... And, it is a bit the same with documentaries. They have to be very good. There has to be a reason why you want to watch for 60 minutes or 90 minutes. Only five years ago, documentaries were made because you needed X number of documentaries to fill up a schedule but that is disappearing now. Today, I think people make documentaries because they've found a way to say something interesting. (Ibid.)

As long as regulations, guidelines and, crucially, funding remain in place, the BBC brand with its comprehensive editorial and production guidelines, reputation for high journalistic standards and high production values would add value to the Storyville site and effectively guarantee the quality of the documentary films shown there. As such, the Storyville site would become a potential safe haven for documentary films, and an invaluable alternative to an unregulated internet:

It is a worry that in 20 years' time there'll be very little of what we call journalism, whether it is in print, whether it is on television, whether it is on the internet....I think it is a serious problem. That is actually why, if places like the BBC are to survive, they will become more important. If something appears on the BBC, it is vetted, somebody is responsible for it and it is supposed to be not full of lies. One impact of what is happening is, that places like the BBC, and there are not

that many of them left, are becoming more valuable ... It seems to me that every so-called advance in media or technology supplies us with lots of more opportunities of telling the truth and quite effective ones of telling lies as well.... [and] places like the BBC are very well-equipped to say, 'This is true, this may be true, and this is not true at all. But you have to collaborate with us actually in figuring out what is really true.'... 20, 30 years ago, you thought, maybe the model of extinction of information was Nineteen Eighty-Four. It's not, it's now. It's a sort of relativisation of information and it is the fact that you might get to the situation where nobody really knows anymore what is the truth, because there's so many different accounts of it, and they cannot be arsed to figure out which is which.' (Ibid.)

Nick Fraser sees the future of the documentary film online either in terms of global themes collaboration with other public service broadcasters, like www.whydemocracy.net and www.whypoverty.net , or aggregated and branded documentary hubs, be they under the BBC or the *Storyville* banner. This Fraser regards as a way of raising the quality of documentary films, safeguarding and protecting the standards of reporting, and creating dialogue and discussion though the medium of documentary film on all platforms.

Concluding remarks

In an increasingly competitive market for audiovisual content across platforms, the institutional, intellectual and economic logic that has historically informed broadcasters is changing. This affects the work practices, strategies and *modus operandi* of the established public service broadcasters, Channel 4 and BBC, including their commissioning and scheduling practices in relation to documentary and factual content. Both channels seek to extend their brands and deliver documentary content online, and executives and commissioners within their documentary departments are beginning to see their roles not only as commissioners and creators of documentary film, but also as online curators of documentary content.

By taking on the role of curators of content, the BBC and Channel 4 fulfil their PSB obligations to deliver documentary content across platforms and move towards becoming public service media providers. They also reinforce and re-assert their positions as leading providers of documentary films in the multiplatform mediascape and as the gatekeepers of what documentary content is shown, where and when. Thus, traditional media hegemonies are mirrored online.

As long-form documentary and factual films and content migrate online and across platforms, commissioners and documentary strand editors place increasing emphasis is placed on branding and curating this content,

which in turn influences the commissioning of documentary and factual content. In pursuing a strategy of commissioning for verticals, Channel 4 is widening the definition of documentary film to encompass documentary content, related to but not necessarily dependent on, nor even associated with, a specific documentary film, as well as monetising their own as well as non-proprietary content. Conversely, as the interviews and case studies from the BBC show, documentary online can also be seen as a way to heighten and preserve quality and standards in a global context. Although Channel 4 and the BBC differ in their views of the function of portals and what they will mean for the forms and aesthetics of documentary film, both channels see the future of documentary and factual broadcasting as existing on curated and dedicated multiplatform portals, aggregating documentary content under a channel banner or brand.

The extent to which these strategies will affect specific documentary projects, practices, forms and aesthetics would be a fertile subject for further research.

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Article 3 Newsjacking the Media: Video Ambushing and AV Astroturfing

Introduction

This chapter focuses on corporate and organisational level media interventions. Analysing case studies of corporate video ambushing and audiovisual (AV) astroturfing, it will examine what happens when viral videos generated by corporations and organisations collide with the conventions and practices of traditional media institutions. It will also explore how commercial, religious and political groups adopt the tactics of social and activist media; draw on established broadcast genre conventions; and utilise 'old' media platforms and practices when using video to amplify and further their issues and interests.

Today, most critics and scholars agree that the opportunities to create, upload and distribute video content online afforded by digital technology, the internet and Web 2.0 are affecting the dynamics of the mediascape and the traditional paradigm of broadcasting. Online video streaming sites provide powerful new ways of sharing, publishing and broadcasting video for members of the public and media professionals alike. This has caused a shift in the relationship between the broadcaster, the producer and the audience, and has transformed the viewer from a passive consumer of audiovisual content delivered at certain times and on certain channels, into a potential 'producer' who, at least in theory, is able to contribute, to engage with and even to produce audiovisual content online, as discussed by amongst others Axel Bruns (2007), Henry Jenkins (2006), and Jean Burgess and Joshua Green (2009). Opinions, however, differ as to whether these changes will lead to a more dialogic, dialectic and democratic mediascape (Benkler, 2006; Nick Couldry, 2010; Couldry & Curran, 2003; Jenkins, 2006), or, whether the possible debates and discourses will simply be hijacked by established media institutions, organisations and corporations, and become a continuation or even reinforcement of old hierarchies and media hegemonies, albeit on new platforms.

In discussions about the democratic or dialogic potential of this new mediascape within academic circles and in the press at large, there is a tendency to focus on media interventions as counter-establishment activities carried out by politicised individuals, activists or grassroots organisations: and produsage and user-generated content as non-commercial and therefore belonging to the realm of the non-professional and hobbyist video-maker. However, recent research shows that the relationship between the professional, the commercial production sector and non-professional produsage is increasingly reciprocal and intertwined and that there is a need for further explorations into the complex dynamics of this field. For example, Burgess and Green's research into video sharing on YouTube illustrates that commercial content co-exists in an increasingly interdependent and reciprocal relationship with private user-generated content, even if these interactions are neither straightforward nor unproblematic (2009). For instance, in her work on user-generated content Burgess argues that research into content sharing and social media would benefit from an emphasis on the uses of audiovisual material online rather than simply looking at its production end reception (2011). Similarly, from a professional production perspective, John T. Caldwell differentiates between worker, producer and user-generated content in his research into the increasingly intertwined labour and economic flows and the consequent merging of the roles and functions of production workers within the TV and film production industries (2011). In the area of politics, the conflict and contests, but also the interconnectedness and interdependence, between activist and established media has been explored by Nick Couldry and James Curran (2003) and Graham Meikle (Meikle, 2002).

In Chapter 1 of *Contesting Media Power*, Couldry and Curran argue that media is an 'emergent form of social power in complex societies whose basic infrastructure depends increasingly on the fast circulation of information and images.' (Couldry & Curran, 2003, p. 4) Defining media as the 'historic result of countless local battles over who has the power to represent the reality of others' (ibid., p. 6) and focussing on activist media, Couldry and Curran argue that although the struggle for media power is intensifying as the means intervene in established media hegemonies, access airtime and to represent views outside of the mainstream become more widely available and accessible, these conflicts are rarely visible. Media power is not made explicit by those who benefit from it and consequently the power struggles that have taken place throughout history are not remembered as such. In *Why Voice Matters*, Nick Couldry expands on these points and makes the case that today there is a crisis of voice. He argues that under the conditions of neoliberalism everyone can speak and every voice is a statement of truth, but we only hear those we are allowed to hear. Thus democracy and expression is under threat from the mainstream media that embodies and enforces neoliberal values and hegemonies that inherently exclude equal access to voice. Couldry sees a plurality of voice as the solution and the internet as a place and space that can potentially cater for this (2010).

In the following pages I will explore specific cases of corporately produced videos that have – in line with this volume’s central concern – intervened in the practices of traditional media institutions, by forcing themselves onto news agendas, or, by influencing the editorial, programming and scheduling decisions of broadcasters. In this process the mechanisms in the battle for media power are laid bare. Following on from the thinking of the critics above, this chapter aims to widen the perception of who the users and the agents are in today’s mediascape. It will show that it is not only the activists and disenfranchised who upload ostensibly viral content online in order to punch through the news agendas of traditional media institutions, but also established corporations and organisations.

Placing these cases in a historical context, I will argue that while the platforms on which video ambushing and astroturfing occur and the technology used are new, the objectives and strategies behind video ambushing and astroturfing are not. When corporations and organisations use audiovisual content to promote their brands and further their corporate issues and interests they draw on established media practices; they put advertising strategies into play; they build on the traditions, conventions, narrative strategies, and aesthetics of journalism and documentary film; they take inspiration from YouTube videos; and they replicate the tactics of activist media. Historically, as well as today, video ambushing and AV astroturfing content are designed to work and interact with traditional media institutions and outlets, seeking to use these to amplify their message. In examining the phenomena of video ambushing and astroturfing that utilises and piggybacks established media platforms and conventions as well as grassroots activism, it emerges that the players who make most effective use of video ambushing and astroturfing are often established, politically and economically powerful organisations. Within the political spectrum it is usually NGOs, quangos, religious groups and political campaigners; and within the commercial sphere, it is industry and business lobbyists and advertising agencies. While the internet and UGC (user-generated content) have inarguably changed the dynamics and paradigm of broadcasting, as well as given organisations and corporations new communication tools and outlets to communicate and promote their issues and interests, the historical hierarchies of power and media hegemonies remain firmly in place. Indeed, newspaper editors as well as TV executives, strand and commissioning editors still preside over what stories, programmes and content is commissioned, how they are produced and when and where they are distributed (Doyle, 2002; Preston, 2003). Thus it is the traditional gatekeepers within the mediascape who still decide what comes to the fore online, is printed in the press or is aired on TV (Bondebjerg, 2010; Caldwell, 2008).

Video ambushing and newsjacking

Video ambushing and AV astroturfing are both terms that describe audiovisual content uploaded and circulated online outside of the control of established media institutions. The term 'video ambushing' was coined by the British weekend broadsheet *The Observer* (D. Smith) in May 2007 and has since been used to describe a situation in which non-broadcasters turn the camera on programme makers and upload the footage online in order to undermine them, their programme and/or the broadcasters. Thus, video ambushing can be defined as an immediate and unexpected audiovisual counter-argument, uploaded online in response to an original networked TV production.

AV astroturfing uses viral video to carry out campaigns or advocacy in support of the agendas of political parties or corporations. The term 'astroturfing' is derived from Astroturf, a brand of synthetic carpeting that resembles natural grass, and, similarly, the aim of AV astroturfing is to give the appearance of having been produced by amateurs, activists or grassroots organisations in order to foster, influence and manipulate a seemingly independent public reaction to an event, product, campaign or person.

As such, both types of audiovisual activism function as interventions, counter-discourses and arguments that appear to be in opposition to mainstream media. Cases of video ambushing and astroturfing are often seen as renegade, and, by some, as underhand or illicit means of making political or commercial points outside and in spite of the traditional media hegemonies and their gatekeeping functions. Both are recent phenomena and emerge from the ability to stream, upload and download AV media online, and are therefore often associated with non-professional or amateur production. However, as already stated, this is not always the case.

The techniques and practices used in video ambushing and astroturfing are not new. Throughout the history of mainstream news and factual TV production, one central aim of investigative documentary films has been to uncover, expose, document and transmit stories that would otherwise not reach public attention. While there are some early examples of investigative documentaries such as the seminal *Housing Problems* (Anstey & Elton, 1935, UK), the ability to record footage on location was made considerably easier with the introduction of lightweight cameras and portable sound equipment in the 1960s. This technological innovation sparked a proliferation of TV series whose premise it was to expose criminals or wrongdoers by either confronting them on camera or going undercover. For example, in the UK, the weekly *The Cook Report* (ITV, 1985-1998, UK) followed the investigations of reporter Roger Cook, and each programme culminated with Cook and his camera crew confronting rogue traders, conmen and criminals face-to-face (Holland, 2006). More recently, the

investigative journalist Donal MacIntyre revealed the violent and illegal behaviour of, among others, Chelsea football fans and animal rights activists in the documentary series *MacIntyre Undercover* and *MacIntyre Investigates* (BBC, 1999-2003) which was exported across the globe (Goddard, et al., 2007). In addition, political satirists, such as the British political comedian and satirist Mark Thomas and the American documentary maker Michael Moore habitually use on-camera door-stepping to make their points more forcefully.

Outside of the established media institutions, activists and campaign groups also use video ambushing as a political strategy, partly to make headline news and partly to protect themselves from misrepresentation in the press and adverse news coverage. Photographing and filming events and submitting this footage to news stations in order to win airtime and highlight issues that would otherwise not make it onto the mainstream news agendas are central to the campaigns of many environmental, animal and human rights action groups. Greenpeace spearheaded this practice in the 1980s and 1990s, taking their own embedded documentary photographers and video crews with them to document their actions and missions, and often to great effect. To this day, it is hard to forget the footage of seal cubs being clubbed to death, or the film clips of inflatable motorboats manoeuvring between the whales and the whalers that Greenpeace regularly supplied to broadcasters across the world in the 1980s and 1990s.

Today, political parties, lobbyists and campaign groups – as well as paramilitary and terrorist organisations – also use blogs, vlogs, websites and video to forward their points and penetrate the news programmes of the mainstream media. Viral video and AV astroturfing are fast becoming key tools for securing public attention. As such both are examples of ‘newsjacking’, a term I have coined to describe how individuals and organisations force their story into mainstream media by virtue of receiving so many hits, trending on Twitter, or by generating so much traffic online that this online activity becomes a story in itself. For example the MEP (Member of the European Parliament) Daniel Hannan recently made headlines on the news channels of British terrestrial TV by securing a huge number of hits on YouTube when he re-read a three-minute speech in the European parliament echoing the WWII British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The news story was not the speech, its message, or its effect but rather the fact that the YouTube video had received a huge number of hits on YouTube (over 2.887.000 in April 2012) (Sparrow, 2009). Footage of paramilitary and terrorist actions, for example videos of kidnappers and roadside bombings, regularly made it into the mainstream news agendas during the occupation of Iraq. In these cases, the camera is as efficient and perhaps even more effective a campaign tool for the insurgent, than the military action itself. The roadside bomb hits its target and the kidnap footage hits the world's press. So successful can such a strategy become that following the partial transmission of the gruesome beheading of British engineer Ken Bigley in Iraq in 2004, the media initiated a voluntary clampdown, at least in

Western countries, on showing footage of executions, amidst fear that the shock value of this footage would increase the negotiating powers of the hostage takers and lead to further executions.

Scientology and Me – the first case of video ambushing

The first recognised case of ‘video ambushing’ took place in May 2007, when The Church of Scientology disapproved of the claims that the journalist John Sweeney was making about them in the BBC documentary, *Scientology and Me*, and streamed their own footage of the filming of one of his interviews on YouTube. Here, Sweeney was seen to completely lose his temper accusing Scientologists of misquoting and manipulating him. The clip and story made the headlines across the major news channels in the UK, and, for the first time – and on prime-time news – the BBC felt obliged to defend their editorial practice and decisions in the face of a clip shown on YouTube.

The context as well as the timing of the video ambush of the reporter John Sweeney and the documentary *Scientology and Me* is significant. The documentary was part of the BBC’s flagship current affairs documentary strand Panorama. Running for over 50 years, Panorama is, at the time of writing, one of only two current affairs documentary strands in the UK that covers national as well as international subjects, the other being Channel 4’s Dispatches. The journalist who fronted *Scientology and Me*, John Sweeney, had previously worked as an investigative reporter for the Sunday broadsheet, *The Observer* before joining Panorama in 2001. *Scientology and Me* was part of one of the BBC’s most esteemed and established documentary strands, made by a veteran reporter and thus placed itself at the very centre of British current affairs documentary making and the investigative journalism tradition. This, no doubt, contributed to the forcefulness of the BBC’s reaction and response to Scientology’s video ambush.

When John Sweeney started making this film, the Church of Scientology co-operated with him on the project. However, as filming progressed, the organisation grew to dislike Sweeney’s approach and the questions he was asking about them. They withdrew their consent to take part in the programme and reported 152 breaches of editorial guidelines to the BBC and Ofcom, the UK’s telecom and media watchdog. None of the breaches were upheld. The BBC also launched an internal investigation, which concluded that while Sweeney’s conduct was inappropriate, he had been provoked by Scientology and that the production as a whole had been conducted in a fair and proper manner. The BBC therefore decided to go ahead with the completion of the film.

However, the Church of Scientology had also been filming during the making of the documentary. To discredit Sweeney, undermine the documentary and presumably stop the programme, the church uploaded some of their own footage on YouTube. In response, the BBC re-edited the film to include the Scientologists' own YouTube footage. They also changed the editorial focus of the programme so that, instead of an investigation into the Church of Scientology, the documentary now centred on the events that preceded and triggered Sweeney's tantrum. Accordingly, the documentary was renamed *Scientology and Me*. In the week leading up to the transmission of the documentary, the BBC used their own recordings of the same situations that the Church of Scientology had filmed and posted online as promotional trailers for the documentary. On the day of the transmission, the BBC's news department made the story headline news and the series editor for Panorama, Sandy Smith appeared to defend his editorial decisions on the six o'clock news. *Scientology and Me* secured an audience share of 4.9 million viewers, the highest for a Panorama programme in eight months. In this clever editorial and PR move, the BBC turned the situation around from one of discredit and embarrassment to one where the broadcaster could be seen to acknowledge, openly confront and deal with the Scientologists' online criticism of them. The BBC had counter-video ambushed the Scientologists.

There were two key aspects to the video ambush by the Church of Scientology that distinguished it from the earlier practices of journalists and current affairs programme makers and activists outlined above. The first of these was the newfound ability of the Church of Scientology to circumvent the gatekeeping function that the editors of broadcasters would have previously exercised and broadcast directly on YouTube. By uploading their footage to the internet, a non-networked platform, the Church of Scientology was able to reach a wide community online and hit back at a networked BBC programme. Although the BBC managed to harness and neutralise this criticism – some would argue even turn it around – it was nonetheless forced to change the content and editorial of one of its programmes in order to take into account footage generated by an outside source. The second, novel feature to this situation was the BBC's reaction to this unwelcome criticism on a new media platform. The BBC not only felt obliged to change the programme title and content, but also to strongly and publicly defend its editorial practices, guidelines and journalistic standards in the news in response to a clip broadcast on YouTube.

In these two ways, the video ambushing of *Scientology and Me* illustrates how changes in the relationship between producer, broadcaster and audience can manifest themselves on a practical level. Video ambushing can influence the editorial and news agendas of even the world's most widely respected broadcaster. The Church of Scientology made its point online and was in fact heard and responded to by the BBC. However, the Church of Scientology is a media savvy organisation, backed by celebrities, formers of public opinion, and a

strong legal team, and is (in)famous for its powerful marketing and PR machine. It seems likely that these facts also contributed to the gravity of the BBC's response. As a national broadcaster with access to many different types of footage (news, documentary, and pre-programme trailers) the BBC was, in this case, able to return the ambush and have the last word. But this case exemplifies the extent to which the BBC is prepared to use its institutional, editorial and scheduling power to stay in charge of how stories are broadcast and perceived, in order to maintain its position as a powerful media gatekeeper.

Writing five years after the event, what is most remarkable about this first recognised case of video ambushing is that it did not open the floodgates for video ambushing as a new media practice. There are numerous other cases of video ambushing around the world that have been brought to public attention by media watchdogs. For example, in Australia a camera crew from Nine Network continued trailing and filming a Mr Amr and his son Omar who were leaving a court on bail for allegations of rioting, despite being asked politely not to over 25 times not to do so. This led to verbal altercations in the street, which were later broadcast giving the impression that Mr Amr had attacked the crew. However, the incident was also filmed by a crew from a different TV station and this footage showed that it was in fact Amr who had been provoked both by the persistent filming and by the Nine Network cameraman who called him a 'f*** terrorist.' This eventually led to the dismissal of the cameraman and an unreserved apology (ABC, 2010).

Similarly the subject(s) of mainstream news and documentaries can speak back and defend their reputations or represent alternative points of view after the TV transmission of a news story or documentary on vlogs online. Examples are the multitude of vlogs highlighting the perceived bias and tone of the CNN documentary *Unwelcome Neighbours: Muslims Next Door* (CNN, 2011) as well as videos uploaded in response and opposition to the BBC coverage of the Israeli charge on the Gaza flotilla in 2010. Also, conspiracy or counter-argument films abounds online, the most famous being Dylan Avery's documentary *Loose Change* (2005,9, US) claiming that the US government carried out the 9/11 attacks and the ensuing series of films, e.g. *Screw Loose Change* (Anon., 2006), disputing Avery's arguments.

However, despite this variety and multitude of media interventions, it is noteworthy that video ambushes do not habitually challenge, or offer alternatives and counter-positions to the news agenda of the established broadcasters and their news programmes – at least, not in ways that are brought to mainstream attention by these same established media outlets. 'Video ambushing' as a term and a threat has certainly entered the vocabulary of media practices across the world, but one has to wonder if the BBC would have reacted in the same manner had the clip been posted by an individual, who could more easily have been ignored or silenced by

the BBC's legal department than Scientology. From this perspective, the events surrounding Scientology and Me are maybe precisely an example of Couldry and Curran's media as a 'battles over who has the power to represent the reality of others' (ibid., p. 6), and it may be more fruitful to see this case as a battle for media power between two powerful PR machines, making visible a struggle that normally would not have received public attention. Rather than challenging or subverting the established media hegemonies and hierarchies, this case illustrates that these are mirrored online.

AV astroturfing and viral advertising

An important difference between video ambushing and astroturfing is that while it is transparent who the producers of video ambushes are, the producers of AV astroturfing usually remain covert. The aim of astroturfing is to influence or manipulate the online audience precisely by concealing who the producers are in order to disguise the efforts of the political or commercial entity so as to induce an independent public reaction to an event, product, campaign or person. When the corporate origins of the AV Astroturfing video are revealed, the exercise can backfire spectacularly.

The viral video *Al Gore's Penguin Army* is probably the most famous and well-documented case of video astroturfing (Birchall, 2009; 2006; Jenkins, 2011). This animated spoof of Al Gore and his feature documentary about climate change, *An Inconvenient Truth* (Guggenheim, 2006, US) was posted on YouTube on the date of the theatrical premiere of the documentary on the 24th of May 2006. *Al Gore's Penguin Army* shows Al Gore lecturing penguins to sleep and attempting to hypnotise them into taking action against climate change. Roughly animated and jumpily edited, the video resembles an amateur production. However, two journalists at *The Wall Street Journal*, Antonio Relegado and Dionne Searcey, traced the film's origins to a computer owned by the DCI Group, a Republican-supporting lobby group whose clients include climate change sceptic companies, such as Exxon Mobile and General Motors (2006). To date, the DCI Group has not admitted this.

The use of viral video advertising without company branding has epitomised advertising cool since advertisers hijacked, turned around and used for their own ends Naomi Klein's critique of globalisation and multi-national brands in *No Logo* (2000). The 2008 viral videos *Guys backflip into jeans* and *Guy catching sunglasses on his face*, were both posted anonymously on YouTube and have had 7,1 and 11 million views respectively (April 2011). However both videos are part of marketing campaigns by viral advertising company Cutwater and Feed Company for Levi's and Rayban respectively. Levi's and Rayban both see themselves as 'street' brands. As such they seek to tap into this subculture and model their advertising on contemporary, popular trends. YouTube, social network sites and viral ads were the order of the day in 2008, so Levi's and Rayban were there too.

Although it is never explicitly stated where the videos come from and the uploaders are anonymous, the clips provide the viewer with enough clues to be able to guess. In the Levi's clips the red tab is visible as the guys walk off after jumping into the jeans, while the Rayban connection is given away by their signature design of sunglasses. This is part of why these ads work. They invite the viewer to play along and to try to solve the riddle of its creator. If you are in the know, you become part of their culture of cool. The viewers and consumers are in on the joke. While both *Al Gore's Penguin Army* and the Levi's and Rayban's viral ads circulated online only, another viral ad made headline news on multiple media platforms across the world.

On the 9th of September 2010, a video of a young, blonde mother feeding her baby began circulating online. She addressed the camera directly:

Hi. I'm Karen and this is my baby boy August. I'm trying to do this video because I'm trying to find August's father, so if you're out there this is for you. ...We met one night a year and a half ago when you were on vacation here in Denmark... and then decided to have a drink and, yeah, it's really embarrassing, but it's more or less what I remember. I don't remember where you're from or even your name... but we had sex.

The video, posted and reposted across social media sites, quickly secured over one million hits. Four days later, the Danish tabloid BT revealed that mother and baby were actors and that the clip was a viral advertisement by the Danish national tourist board, VisitDenmark. After this the ad's viewing figures exploded, and the story became headline news not only in Denmark but across the world. Initially VisitDenmark were 'happy and proud of their campaign. This, however, soon changed.

Initially, when Karen began her quest to find the father of baby August, VisitDenmark were delighted with their campaign. The video secured more hits than any other viral campaign created in Denmark, it travelled across social network sites globally and, when Karen was revealed as an actor, it appeared as a news item on TV stations around the world, for example, on BBC News and on Fox News in the US (bbc.co.uk, 2009; Bøgh-Andersen, 2009; Fajstrup, 2009; HuffingtonPost/AP, 2009; Schroeder, 2009). Dorte Kiilerich, Managing Director of VisitDenmark, appeared on Danish national news asserting that, 'On YouTube some stories are true and some are false', implying that on YouTube no one really cared. Defending the viral ad, she stated that the organisation had set out to 'put Denmark on the map' (my translation) and had succeeded: 'now the world is talking about Denmark' (TV2news.dk, 2009). The press did not agree with Kiilerich's assessment of the situation, nor did the Danish Minister of Business Lene Espersen, nor the general population of Danish women, who took offence at being portrayed as casual purveyors of drunken one-night-stands to international visitors. Other

commentators wondered whether this advertisement would necessarily attract the kind of tourists that Denmark actually wanted. Five days after the viral ad started its life online, on the 14th September, it was taken down and removed from all official sites. To this day, hundreds of spoofs still circulate online. There are remakes by fathers from Brooklyn to Sweden seeking mothers for their pets and dolls, as well as *Star Wars* and *Das Untergang* (*Downfall*) memes where Darth Vader and Hitler claim paternal responsibility. On the 25th of September, Kiilerich stepped down as Managing Director for VisitDenmark³⁵.

Authenticity and intimisation as strategies and selling points

Mother Seeking Father was an effective viral video because it relied on conventions from YouTube vlogs that draw their authenticity and reference to reality from conventions established by reality TV formats and the aesthetics and forms of documentary films. In *Freakshow*, Jon Dovey links the rise in what he calls ‘first person media’ and the focus on first-person narratives in both reality shows and documentaries to the socio-economic climate and conditions of the TV production industry in the 1990s and 2000s. He suggests that as production budgets are reduced, the investigative documentary – that demands bigger budgets and carries with it greater legal and editorial risks – is replaced by the personal account, which because of its testimonial nature is an approximation of truth that cannot be contested. This, Dovey argues, has brought about a new ‘regimen of truth’ where the subjective experience gains validity at the expense of ‘objective’ or more general truths (2000).

In *Vi Ses på TV! Medier & Intimitet* (*See You on TV! Media and Intimacy*), Anne Jerslev explores the foregrounding of intimacy and privacy in today’s media output, and adds two dimensions to Dovey’s notion of ‘first person media’. Tracing the emergence and reliance on personal narratives back to the 1970s, Jerslev argues that in order to politically and legally challenge legislation that prevented equality between sexes, practices and situations that had hitherto been seen as private, had to enter the public debate and sphere in order to be taken into account. As the slogan went: ‘the private is political.’ Since then, narratives that previously belonged to the confines of the home and private lives have strayed into the public domain. Jerslev sees first person media as much as a historical development and tendency as a *strategy* of intimisation and cites the theories of American sociologist Erving Goffman and the media theorist Joshua Meyrowitz to support this. Goffman put forward the notion of a front region and a back region or stage to describe and account for differences in behaviour in people’s private and public lives. To be authentic is to behave authentically and in

³⁵ The tourism industry must have sided with Kiilerich. The following year she took up a position as Managing Director of tourism North of Sealand, Denmark.

accordance with a given social situation. It is the 'audience' or other social actors that validate this behaviour as 'impressions of reality.' Meyrowitz applies the terms of Goffman's metaphorical theatre to media practices and the mediated world. Here, the regions are no longer tied to physical locations, but are acts of communication and, consequently, Meyrowitz proposes several spheres or stages: deep back region, middle region and forefront stage. With the rise of new media platforms today, backstage behaviour is moving frontstage, or, in his terms, onstage. The camera has more and more access to the private spheres at the same time as production processes are increasingly exposed and transparent. Jerslev sees this foregrounding of the private as creating 'an experience of intimacy.' Rather than focussing on an issue that can be discussed and debated, it is the *experienced* that is 'real' and, as such, its truthfulness is beyond dispute. Drawing on the French media researcher Dominique Mehl, Jerslev adds that you cannot argue with an eyewitness: the first-hand account is true – even it differs from what actually took place. Since the 1970s, the necessity for these private discourses to enter the public domain, or, the backstage moving frontstage, has broken down demarcations between the spheres. Private discourses and personal testaments have become legitimate and valid discourses in their own right and have remained in the public sphere ever since. Jerslev's point is that moving the backstage frontstage was and is a strategy that allows the subjective to become objective. Thus intimisation is not simply an overall tendency within documentary films, reality TV genres like game shows and docusoaps; it can also be used as strategy to legitimise and validate points and political perspectives (2004).

Jerslev's and Dovey's theories apply to online video too. Documentary scholar Michael Renov (2009) sees the traits of the autobiographical documentary mirrored in the personal accounts of blogs and the confessionals of the vlog. Danny Birchall (2009) sees the direct address of the webcam confessional as a new online documentary form, 'the lives of others'. James Bennett draws on Henry Jenkins's comparison between the videos on YouTube and vaudeville aesthetics and notes that early YouTube videos were 'courting a sense of realness' through acted imitations of amateurism and careful staging to look unrehearsed (2011).

In AV astroturfing, strategies of intimacy are used to suggest authenticity and thereby validate and legitimise the points being made. Interestingly, the aesthetics and *mise en scène* of *Mother Seeking Father* and indeed of most of the vlog is precisely and literally that of the backstage. Recording with webcams often takes place in the bedroom, the most intimate and private room in the house. The direct address to camera of the webcam aesthetic underlines the notion that there is no differentiation between production roles: the subject recorded is also the subject recording. The recording is immediate, in your face and (seemingly) upfront and honest. Similarly, in the Levi's and Rayban ads, the grade and resolution are low, the lighting inadequate or burnt out, the camerawork shaky, and the editing rough or simply cuts from one to another handheld sequence. The *mise en*

scène is informal and the physical settings are generally domestic or everyday spaces: the living room, the bedroom, the park and the suburban street. The intimate and private have become *a priori*, the intimate individual is placed in the foreground, and what counts as real and authentic are his or her experiences.

Jerslev writes: 'What is scandalous and uncomfortable is if the mask suddenly is revealed to be a mask.' (2004, p. 107) This was precisely what happened when *Mother Seeking Father* was revealed to be a viral ad. It is deceiving and outrageous when the person in the video is in fact not the one he or she pretends to be, without letting the audience in on the joke or riddle. The outrage surrounding the revelation of the fakery of VisitDenmark's ad has precedents in other cases online most famously, *lonelygirl15*, an early vlog diary on YouTube that was also revealed as fake, or, at least, an actor acting the lines of a script. However, here public indignation at the unmasking was ameliorated by the fact that the stunt was a drama experiment by Mesh Flinders and Miles Beckett, two independent producers trying to prove and promote their skills (Burgess & Green, 2009, pp. 27-28). The deceit had a positive purpose. In the case of *Mother Seeking Father* there was no such redeeming element. A national and public organisation was seen to be misleading the public using the taxpayers' own money. Astroturfing works only if its corporate origins remain hidden and it maintains its illusion of authenticity.

Perspectives on AV astroturfing and video ambushing as communication tools

Phenomena like viral videos, AV astroturfing and video ambushing simultaneously subvert and confirm traditional media hegemonies. As the cases here clearly show, new technology and the internet have paved the way for new ways of impacting on and interacting with the established media institutions and the media landscape at large. Strategies of astroturfing and video ambushing can impact on the schedules, editorial and news agendas of established media institutions. However, while content generated by users or players outside the (control of) the broadcasters can make headlines in the traditional media institutions, 'the users' who are generating the content and use video ambushing and AV astroturfing as communication tools are not only hobbyist and amateur users, but also precisely the institutions and organisations that have traditionally been able to impact on the mediascape. As the borders between producer, text and user blurs, corporations and organisations increasingly mimic the aesthetics, conventions and hallmarks of amateur, 'producer' and user-generated content, as well as use the strategies of advertising, social and activist media and the conventions and genres of TV and other mainstream media, in order to be heard in the printed and broadcasted news and on social sites.

Cases of video ambushing and AV astroturfing are particularly interesting in that they demand the attention of popular and social news consumers as well as traditional media institutions. VisitDenmark's viral ad ran as social

news on Facebook alongside the news coverage of the traditional news and broadcasters. The origins of *Al Gore's Penguin Army* was news in *The Wall Street Journal* and on blogs, and the *lonelygirl15* exposé ran on YouTube message boards as well as in the press. However, unlike 'traditional' news stories that are found or discovered by journalists and reporters and then broadcast in mainstream news, video ambushing, newsjacking and AV astroturfing are generated and emerge outside these established media. Rather than being invited in by journalists, they force their own way into the mainstream news programmes. As such they piggyback the viewing figures and broadcast reach that television stations command and use traditional media to amplify their message³⁶. In this collision between established and new media practices, however, the battle for media power, which is generally not explicit, is brought to the fore revealing that the institutions and players that dominated the old media hegemonies are very much the same as those in charge in the new media paradigm. Returning to Couldry's theories on the battle for media power and the importance of a plurality of voices to ensure democracy and participation in the late modern society, the cases described above show that the voices that often rise to the top are still primarily those who have the resources to spin as well as those who control the gates through which information flows. Rather than heralding the dawn of a new dialogic and democratic mediascape, new technology, Web 2.0 and convergence more often mark the continuation of the battle between the PR machines and media institutions on new platforms.

Video ambushing and AV astroturfing are effective communication tools. Professional and amateur producers alike can generate and upload video and thus be heard and seen. However, these activities still exist within the wider context of an established power-relationship between the broadcaster and producer and the existing media hegemonies. Amid the excitement of the possibilities of Web 2.0 and the numerous individuals campaigning for and against a variety of cases and causes online, it is interesting to note that the cases that receive most attention in mainstream media are created and orchestrated by established organisations. The powers of the traditional media institutions and players have not ceased to exist, they simply manifest themselves in different ways and practices. As the corporations and organisations seek to hold on to their power to influence the news agendas, and as media institutions defend their positions as gatekeepers, old media hegemonies, marketing and publicity strategies are replicated and reinvented online. Today, traditional and established media institutions to a large extent still control who interacts, how and when.

³⁶ It has been observed by amongst other Graham Meikle that activist media is particularly efficient when working in conjunction with traditional media platforms (2002).

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The following article, *Documentary at Play*, is an extended and expanded version of a conference paper of the same name presented at the conference *New Documentary Formats*, which was organised by Senior Lecturer Christa Lykke Christensen and held by the Department of Film & Media at Copenhagen University on March 30th 2012. The paper was presented by its co-author, Assistant Professor Anne Mette Thorhauge.

Another version of this conference paper will be published as a chapter, also called *Documentary at Play*, in the anthology *Online Credibility and Digital Ethos: Evaluating Computer-Mediated Communication*. This anthology is edited by Shawn Apostle and Moe Folk and will be published by IGI Global on 31st December 2012. It focuses – as its title suggests – on ethical considerations as well as notions of credibility and validity of online and digital media and communication forms. Although fascinating, this is not the central focus of this thesis and it is therefore not relevant in the context of the previous three articles in this thesis, or in line with its theoretical framework.

The article below, the conference paper as well as the chapter in the anthology *Online Credibility and Digital Ethos: Evaluating Computer-Mediated Communication* are co-written with Assistant Professor Anne Mette Thorhauge, Department of Film and Media, Copenhagen University, Denmark (and from January 2013 Associate Professor at Roskilde University Centre, Denmark). Thorhauge is the main author of the sections on games theory, as well as the analysis of *Kuma Wars* and *Global Conflict: Palestine*. I am mainly responsible for the sections on documentary theory and history as well as the analysis of the database documentaries *Gaza/Sderot* and *Model Agency*. The overall concept and theoretical framework were developed in collaboration, and the rest of this article was co-written.

Article 4. Documentary at Play?

Introduction

Videogames are increasingly used as strategic communication tools offering new ways of representing subject matter and depicting real life situations. However, they differ in profound ways from more linear types of communication by integrating audiences in interactive modes of experience. This calls for a new understanding of the communication that takes place, and new concepts and frameworks in which to explore the ways in which videogames mediate and communicate facts and knowledge about the world, and in this way make statements about reality.

In this context, documentary games, or so-called docu-games, are particularly interesting. Docu-games are a diverse group of games which have in common an attempt to depict and reflect on aspects of reality, be they military conflicts, historical periods or contemporary political and socio-cultural issues. As such, they purport to perform a function similar to that of documentary films and have become a new tool for individuals or organisations to communicate their agendas, issues and interests.

This article will outline different perspectives on docu-games, going beyond the mere subject matter and visualisation towards questions about simulations and games as conveyors of facts and statements about reality and thus performing a function similar to that of documentary films³⁷ (Bogost, 2007; Nieborg, 2004; Poremba, 2011; Raessens, 2006; Sanchez-Laws, 2010; Sisler, 2009). Applying concepts from current documentary theory and game studies to docu-games, this article hopes to transcend and add to current thinking about the ways in which games relate to real life situations and reference the relationship between the real world and the game.

Perspectives on docu-games

The emergence of hybrid and interactive forms of documentary, such as newsgames, persuasive games, crowd-sourced documentaries, database documentaries and docu-games, has rekindled the debate about how to understand the relationship between fact and fiction, representation and reality, which has raged since the birth of documentary film. Recently, and following this tradition, critics have questioned in which ways, if at all, docu-games – or games that self-identify as, or purport to be ‘documentary’ – can be regarded as being able to refer to and make statements about reality.

These debates have centred around three aspects of documentary games. Firstly, scholars have explored how games as digital simulations and animations can make meaningful statements about the world. This question can – and often has been – equally be asked about documentary films. Secondly, they have asked how, and if, games as interactive systems can reference reality, when the depicted action is the product of, and is defined by, the choices and strategies of the player. Thirdly, and closely linked to the previous point, critics have enquired

³⁷ Of course other art forms also refer to reality in various ways and employ different strategies for doing so. This article, however, is concerned with documentary games and the focus is therefore on how games, on the one hand, and documentaries, on the other, reference reality and convey knowledge and facts about the world.

how games as programmed systems, rather than linear narrative forms, can create and mediate meaningful references to the real world.

In the following pages we will outline the main points of these debates in order to provide the theoretical background and context for this article. Building on this foundation, we will then set out the analytical framework that forms the foundation for the main argument of this article: that is, in order to understand the communicative function of computer games, it is crucial to explore the relationship and dynamics between audiovisual representation, narrative contextualisation, and programmed behaviour of the game, and thus it is necessary to take into account the interaction between all and each of these three levels. Furthermore, we will then couple this analytical framework for understanding computer games with the rhetoric and cognitive documentary theories of Carl Plantinga and Ib Bondebjerg. For Plantinga and Bondebjerg, the status of a documentary film is based on a rhetorical and cognitive contract between the film, its audience and the documentary filmmaker, none of which can meaningfully be seen in isolation. Documentary films reference reality in a variety of ways depending on the specific rhetorical constellation, and can be divided into different subgenres with corresponding epistemic references. Translating this to docu-games, we will argue that the reference to reality in games is established by the interplay and dynamics between gameplay (or narrative contextualisation), audiovisual representation, and the procedural rhetorics of the game, as well as the epistemic reference that this relationship gives rise to. It is this combination that can provide an analytical as well as theoretical framework for understanding docu-games and the ways in which they establish references to reality.

In the latter part of this article, this theoretical and analytical framework will inform the analyses of a number of docu-games, most prominently *KUMA Wars: Afghan Air Strikes* and *Global Conflicts: Afghanistan*. As these analyses will show, it is necessary to take into account both dimensions of this analytical and theoretical framework when seeking to understand how docu-games seek to convey and mediate meaning about the world.

Between representation and reality in documentary films

Being programmed systems and simulations, games are at the outset artificialities, constructions and simulations, quite the opposite of the direct 'imprint' of reality that is the commonplace conception of the documentary. However, documentaries cannot be reduced to this narrow definition, and, as we will explore below, the privileged position that reality occupies in documentaries has been explained in many different ways. Although documentary critics generally agree that documentary films have reality as their core subject matter, most documentary theorists have moved away from seeing documentary films as necessarily requiring an one-

to-one relationship between the content of the film and reality, in the same way as in, for example, André Bazin's indexical relationship between the photographic image and reality (A. B. H. Gray, 1960). Today, most critics understand the relationship to reality in documentary films as a more complex negotiation. For example, documentary theorist, Stella Bruzzi points out that indexicality renders virtually every documentary project an impossibility (2000, p. 4), while Patricia Aufderheide argues that 'there is no way of making a film without manipulating information' (2007, p. 2). Indeed, from the very beginning of documentary history, freely interpreted enactments and reconstructions loosely based on real events, have routinely and commonly been used in documentary films as aesthetic and narrative tools. Describing the selection of scenes, thematic and narrative structure of one of the very earliest documentaries, Auguste Lumière's *Le Dejeuner de Bébé* (1895, France), Kevin Macdonald and Mark Cousins observe '[E]ven in the simplest of non-fiction films, the relationship between film and reality is not a straightforward or literal one, but one of metaphor' (Macdonald & Cousins, 1998, p. 5). The earliest recorded incident of reconstruction or fakery took place as early as 1897 when Albert E. Smith and J. Stuart Blackton convincingly reconstructed the battle of Santiago Bay in a water-filled tub with cardboard ships and cigar smoke to produce footage of this key battle in the Spanish-American war (A. E. Smith & Blackton, 1922). Similarly, the seminal ethnographic documentary *Nanook of the North* (1922, UK) was scripted by its maker Robert Flaherty who had the Inuit people enact activities that no longer took place in order to tell the story of their history, lives and struggle for survival. In the 1930s and 1950s, the Scottish documentary maker John Grierson pioneered and defined the documentary genre and is often seen as the originator of, in particular, the authoritative documentary. However, for Grierson the relationship between reality and documentary films was always complex and creative. A prolific documenter of his own film-making practice both in writing and on film, Grierson saw his films precisely not as documents but as *documentaries*, which he described as 'the creative interpretation of actuality' (Grierson, 1933; P. Ward, 2005). In the 1990s, documentary theory gained ground as an academic research area. Scholars like John Corner identified certain modalities that characterised different types of documentary films, such as the authoritative, journalistic voice-over and interview which dominate in the current affairs documentary, or observational fly-on-the-wall footage in the observational documentary (Corner, 1995, 1996, 1997). He notes however, that although a generic approach to documentary films is a productive tool for analysis of this genre, form alone does not determine the documentary status of a film (2009, p. 19). In defining documentary film itself, as well as its genres, Bill Nichols asserts that documentary films and the evidence that they draw on are always ideologically inflected and thus break with the more innocent notions of documentary's relationship between representation and reality (1994, 2009). The works of Corner and Nichols have been hugely influential in defining documentary and non-fiction film and its subgenres, positioning this area as one worthy of scholarly interest and establishing its principle traits, aesthetics and characteristics.

Animated and dramatised documentaries

Documents or evidence – photos, maps, recorded interviews, historical and contemporary footage, etc. – employed within documentary films enforce, at least on the face of it, the impression and perception that the game or film in question is anchored in and refers to the real world and real life events. That said, within documentary film there is a long tradition of animated (Roe, 2011a) and dramatised documentaries (Bondebjerg, 2008, forthcoming 2013; Hight, 2008; P. Ward, 2005, 2009) that can have no such indexical reference because they – like games – consists of recreated documents, be they animated, dramatised or digitally programmed. Yet both dramatised and animated documentaries are considered documentaries all the same.

Representation and reality in animated documentaries and docu-games

Within the field of animated documentary, scholars have explored how these documentaries can reference reality when a direct link between image and/or sound and the reality it depicts is seemingly broken and the audiovisual material of these films has no ontological claim on reality. In her article *Uncanny Indexes: Rotoshopped Interviews as Documentary* Annabelle Honess Roe argues that the insistence on indexicality is based on a blurring of the distinction between indexical and iconic signs, as well as misreadings of Bazin that conflate evidence and filmic representation. (2011b, p. 35) On this basis, she re-examines the audiovisual strategies employed to reference reality in animated documentaries, and argues that in animated interviews, that are sometimes used in this form of documentary, the reference to reality is placed in the space between the absence of the photorealistic image and presence of the animation image. As such the ‘absent visual index and its substitution with animation that ranges from expressionistic to photorealistic has the potential to offer the viewer much insight into the world of the interviewee’ (2011b, p. 36). As the title of her article, *Absence, Excess and Epistemological Expansion: Towards a Framework for the Study of Animated Documentary* suggests, Roe further argues that animated documentaries are able to expand on the range of subjects and sentiments that documentary film can normally represent:

I contend that, while animation may at first seem to threaten the documentary project by destabilizing its claim on the real, the opposite is the case. Rather than questioning the epistemological viability of documentary, as has been done by some authors, I propose that animation broadens and deepens the range of what we can learn from documentaries. One way it does this is by showing us aspects of life that are impossible to film in live action. (2011a, p. 217)

Citing the documentary scholar Bill Nichols, Roe argues that amidst this 'epistemological expansion' reference to reality is established by referring to 'the world' rather than 'a world.' Like Roe, Paul Ward uses Nichols' modes of address between reference to 'a world' versus 'the world' to separate fact from fiction, and notes that there is a:

[...] distinction between fiction (where we are intended to imagine) and nonfiction (where we are intended to believe). However, with an inherently hybrid (and clearly 'artificial') form like an animated film that is re-presenting something from real life, there is a blurring of this distinction. It exists in a liminal space between imagination and belief; this is where the concept of 'alief' is useful. (2011, p. 302)

Exploring the ways in which performance³⁸ in animated documentaries is used to both authenticate events that are not readily reproducible in an audiovisual context, for example sentiments, and to create the audience's perception, or their 'alief', of the reality referred to in animated documentaries, Ward argues that it is in this way that animated documentaries can be understood as referring to reality. Thus research in the field of animated documentaries offers ways to understand how the audiovisual representations in the animated documentary can reference reality, and even expand on the topics and sentiments expressed even though the audiovisual material in these films is entirely reproduced.

Exploring indexicality in digitally reproduced media in her Ph.D. thesis about documentary games, *Real|Unreal: Crafting Actuality in the Documentary Videogame*, Cynthia Poremba takes Roe's points one step further. Noting that 'digital technologies challenge traditional notions of indexicality (a mode of representation that mandates contiguity between referent and sign)', Poremba argues that game designers must 'reclaim indexicality' by understanding this concept in an epistemological rather than ontological sense (2011, p. 46). It is not possible to do justice to Poremba's discussion of and *tour de force* through the history and nature of indexicality, from the photochemical traces of photographic images to the indexicality of heart rate-monitors and Nichol's oblique indexes here. Suffice it to say, that Poremba convincingly argues that there are:

[...] two representational strategies in documentary. The first is the indexical paradigm, in which the data is treated as and referenced for its indexicality; and the second, generative, which uses the data as launching, creating and manufacturing starting points for new realities' (2011, p. 52).

³⁸ Ward also explores other aspects of performance and the performative in animated documentaries and notes, for example that performance can be used to draw attention to the impossibility of documentary presentation (2011, p. 296).

Applying this to documentary games, Poremba argues that 'simulated game spaces both generate and stabilize meaning' (Ibid. p. 56-7) and allow for references to reality to be established in the 'new realities' of digitally reproduced and simulated game worlds.

Thus examining and vindicating audiovisual representations and simulations as means of expressing meaning in documentary contexts, the scholars above also note that audiovisual representation is not the *only* means of establishing a reference to reality in animated documentaries (Roe, 2011a, p. 217; P. Ward, 2002, 2011) and, by extension, in documentary games (Poremba, 2011). Indeed, most documentary and games critics, theorists and, not least, practitioners themselves – the game designers and documentary film-makers – understand this relationship as contextual, complex and, some argue, contractual.

Cognitive documentary theory – reference in dramatised documentaries

It is especially fruitful to explore docu-games through the optics of the documentary and non-fiction film theories of Carl Plantinga (1997, 2005), Ib Bondebjerg (2002, 2008, forthcoming 2013) and Paul Ward (2005, 2009). Building on Corner and Nichols and rooting themselves in David Bordwell and Kirstin Thompson's neoformalist film theories, these theorists take a cognitive approach to documentary films. This approach is based on two innate interpretational frameworks, either the referential/assertive or the fictitious/playful that the audience brings to the film – a framework brought forth by the stylistic and aesthetic elements as well as the contractual relationship established in the meeting with the audience. Plantinga, with reference to speech act theory, anchors the relationship between reality and representation in the rhetorical and communicative function and the context in which this takes place. The bond between film and reality is established by the film's intention and rests on a contractual relationship between the documentary producer and its audience or receivers. Ib Bondebjerg expands on Plantinga's theory and links rhetorical functions and forms of address to various epistemological approaches to reality. Key to the documentary theories of both Plantinga and Bondebjerg is that the relationship between representation and reality is not *a priori* nor an inherent property of the aesthetics, form and style of documentary films, but stems instead from the context, the shared perception of the reality described, as well as the interaction between the documentary maker, its receiver and the film.

Understanding documentary as constituted by its contextual and contractual relationships, allows these critics to free documentary film from being defined by its forms. Based on Nichols' typology Plantinga identifies three

documentary genres³⁹. Each genre is defined by what Plantinga calls 'voice': the formal, the open and the poetic-reflexive. Voice is an expression of the underlying point of view of the film-maker and is constituted by the use, organisation and orchestration of different stylistic, aesthetic, narrative and rhetorical forms and tropes. For Plantinga, aesthetic forms and tropes are thus the building blocks that the overall genre or 'voice' rests upon. These forms do not constitute any reference to reality in themselves, but are the elements that enable the rhetorical function that links documentary representation to reality. Building on Plantinga's documentary typology, Bondebjerg constitutes the dramatised documentary as a fourth documentary genre with its own aesthetics and reference to reality. Working in this same area, in *Documentary: the Margins of Reality* (2005) as well as his chapter 'Drama-documentary: the 'Flight 93' Films' (2009), Paul Ward explores the relationship between drama and documentary. Like Plantinga, neither Bondebjerg nor Ward dispute that certain forms, styles, aesthetics and tropes are part of established conventions and the building blocks of documentary film. Nor do they refute that the reference to reality is more central to the argument of certain documentary sub-genres, for example in the authoritative current affairs documentary which is more assertive in its statements about actuality than other types of documentary films such as the poetic-reflexive documentary. However, this reference to reality is precisely established in the voice of the documentary and is not inherent in its physical properties as such. Crucially, in including the dramatised documentary as a documentary genre, both Bondebjerg and Ward do away with any claim that reality should be found in the form of a film. For both authors, dramatisations, reconstruction, fictive scenarios and animations can be documentary. Paul Ward (2005) writes:

Rather than seeing documentaries [...] as an inevitably failed attempt to render experiences or certain situations *directly*, we should therefore recognise that the aesthetic choices made are merely the formal dimension and have no necessary say in whether or not something is a 'documentary'. What makes a documentary resides somewhere else, in the complex interaction between text, context, producer and spectator. (p. 11)

The use of archival material and documents, the *mise-en-scène* and aesthetic and stylistic features and tropes are simply formal features of the documentary film and cannot in themselves explain the difference between fiction and non-fiction films, as Ward hammers home:

³⁹ Plantinga also - albeit briefly - mentions the drama-documentary as a documentary genre, but he does not elaborate on it in detail, either in *Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Films* (1997) or his 2005 essay *What a Documentary Is, After All* (2005).

It needs emphasising that the use of certain conventions and techniques is not the status of a text's status vis-à-vis the real world. If it were, then *The Office* (BBC, series one 2001; series two 2003, UK) would *be* a documentary; *The Thin Blue Line* (Errol Morris, 1988, US) would *be* a fiction film. (Ibid., pp.11-12)

In a similar way that documentary films can say something about reality without relying on direct indexical references, docu-games can also reference reality and be documentary in their expression. The question, however, is in which ways 'voice' are expressed in computer games in relation to the specific modes of expression in this form.

Computer games as expressive media

Computer games combine traditional play-phenomena and game-phenomena with mediated communication. Thus, on one hand, they are games in roughly the same way as chess or football are games, and, on the other hand, they are audiovisual representations of elaborate game-worlds replete with meaning. This has transformed the question as to whether videogames are expressive media into a contested area. On a basic level, the very idea of videogames as media has been questioned with reference to its kinship with traditional games. They have sometimes been seen as games rather than media and thus not as carriers of communication. Certain regulatory bodies still deal with videogames in this way, but the technological and aesthetic development of videogames from the 1970s to the present has made the expressive aspects of videogames hard to deny. On the other hand, even when videogames are indeed seen as expressive media, their specific expressive aspects have remained a contested issue. In particular, the idea of the videogame as a narrative medium was the object of heated debate during the first years of the millennium with narratologists (Jenkins, 2004; Murray, 1997), and ludologists (Frasca, 2003; Juul, 2001, 2005) arguing about whether or not videogames are able to convey narrative meaning. The narrative characteristics of videogames have sometimes been seen in opposition to their characteristics as simulations (Frasca, 2003), representing another principle of meaning and representation in games. For instance, an increasing focus on the 'procedural rhetorics' of videogames (Bogost, 2007) has drawn attention to the way games as simulations may convey meaning by way of their programmed behaviour rather than their narrative contextualisation and visual representation. The concept of simulation here represents a particular way of explaining the expressive characteristics of games, although it is not the only possible one, and in our analysis we will include several perspectives on the way meaning is conveyed through games.

Thus, videogames are extremely complex texts that share semiotic characteristics with a range of other media and integrate them into programmed systems that convey meaning in their own right. In order to understand how

videogames may relate to reality, it is first necessary to understand how they convey meaning in this way.

Representation in videogames

First of all, videogames are audiovisual representations. Indeed, during game production considerable resources are invested in creating and fine-tuning the audiovisual appearance of games, not least in the so-called triple-A or large-budget productions, making the representational aspect of videogames a relevant object of analysis. However, as we have seen in relation to theories on documentary film and representation above, digitally produced or manually drawn audiovisual representations can not only competently establish references to reality, they can also expand on the areas, subjects and sentiments explored (Roe, 2011a, 2011b; P. Ward, 2011) and even create or 'manufacture new points for reality' (Poremba, 2011, pp. 52-53). Thus, visual representations of videogames do not 'document' particular actions or situations. Instead, they act as a vehicle for simulation of particular actions, events or situations and should be analysed with emphasis on the specific choices and interpretations underlying this simulation or enactment.

Narrative and interaction

Secondly, videogames often include narratives, but in a way that differs considerably from other narrative media such as films and novels. As previously mentioned, this issue has caused considerable debate in the field of game studies and it is not the aim of this article to present the entire discussion. However, in relation to docu-games, it is worth mentioning two important characteristics of videogame narratives: their non-linear structure and their focus on player actions. Regarding the former, the focus of narratology has traditionally been on plotting, that is, on the intricate orchestration of action in time and the deliberate distribution of plot-relevant knowledge to the recipient (Bordwell, 1985). This close relationship between the concept of narrative and the sequential ordering of action is challenged in videogames where the action and outcome are dependent on players' choices and performance. Indeed, much videogame 'action' is highly repetitive and would make no sense within a traditional notion of narrative. Narratives in videogames instead exist as potential embedded in the game world or emerging from its structure (Jenkins, 2004) and serve to contextualise action in different ways. With regards to the second characteristic of videogame narratives, their 'raw material' is player actions. Traditional narratology distinguishes between diegesis and mimesis as two basic narrative modes (Fulton, 2005). According to this distinction, stories can either be told as they typically are in novels or shown as they typically are in films, and this difference indicates different narrative strategies. In comparison, videogames make player

actions possible (Jenkins, 2004). Of course, videogames may retell or frame story events as they often do in so-called cut scenes, that is, non-playable sequences where the plot is represented in a more traditional linear manner, but the choices and actions made available to the player represent new types of narrative building blocks and allow for a new set of narrative strategies. Thus, instead of bringing forth 'authoritative narratives' or presenting linear and predetermined storylines, videogames enable players to enact story events in different ways.

The gamer and the gaming experience

In relation of docu-games, it is this interaction that has led some scholars to question whether docu-games can refer to reality at all. Exploring games as an interactive medium, recent research about docu-games has focussed on the role of the gamer and the gaming experience in creating or establishing a reference to the real world. Here, the majority of scholarship draws on Michael Renov's theories on the autobiographical documentary, linking the first person of the autobiographical films to the perspective and experience of the gamer. Inspired by Renov, Ana Luisa Sanchez-Laws argues that the immersive potential of digital storytelling holds the potential to introduce a new interactive, documentary form, albeit one that can depict a first person perspective on reality only, and therefore ultimately only render a subjective perspective on the truth and understanding of reality (2010). Similarly, Tracy Fullerton compares docu-games to other kinds of real-life simulations, such as the forensic modelling which is now accepted in courts in the United States. She concedes that documentary as simulation has the potential of accurately depicting reality, but is sceptical towards docu-games as sources of information about the real world at this point in time. Again citing Renov, she believes the involvement of the viewer or gamer leads to a subjective point of view which undermines objectivity and creates an 'uncertain' reference to reality (2008). Exploring the relationship between the gaming experience, game and game design, Joost Raessens holds the term 'documentary game' up to critical review and evaluates the ability of docu-games to reflect reality. Also with reference to Renov, Raessens bases his analysis on the intersection between the gaming experience and gameplay, and concludes that documentary games occupy a space in-between objectivity and subjectivity because neither represent reality objectively nor exist as mere subjective renderings of the game designers (2006). Thus, for the authors above, the ability of games to reference reality is problematic. Following their lines of argument, because games are interactive media that depend on the active

participation of the player to unfold, the reference of docu-games to reality is either indeterminate, subjective or, at best, exists in the grey zone between subjectivity and objectivity⁴⁰.

Although the analyses of all the critics above go a long way to explore the gaming experience and the interactive elements of docu-games, objectivity is not always a criteria for referencing reality in all documentaries and ignores the various forms of documentary subgenres and their epistemic references. Also, Michael Renov's research on the autobiographical documentary focuses on the expressive strategies of a subject or character in a documentary film, and not, primarily, on the ways in which documentary texts position themselves *vis-à-vis* the reality they describe (2004, 2009). Although 'first person documentary' and 'first person adventure or shooter' sound alluringly similar, these are vastly different generic forms. Therefore, arguing that the interaction between the gamer and the game rules out the ability of games to reference reality ignores both the complexities in the dynamics between gamer, game and game design as well as other ways of explaining the relationship between reality and representation explored in, for example, games studies, studies of animated documentary and cognitive documentary theory.

Procedural Rhetorics

Finally, videogames are programmed systems and this turns the programmed behaviour of the gameworld and its objects into an alternative source of meaning in the game. This characteristic has sometimes been described as 'procedural rhetorics' (Bogost, 2007), that is, the expression of meaning through processes. According to this point of view, programmed systems and simulations define particular behaviours and causal relationships that work in themselves as statements about the world. For instance, the well-known strategy game *Civilization* not only represents the encounters between its competing countries audiovisually and places them within a historical context, it also makes certain actions possible within the game and grants them different impacts with regard to success or failure and in this way makes particular statements in relation to history and the forces that drove historical events. From a documentary point of view, this implies that 'meaning in videogames is not through a re-creation of the world but through selectively modelling appropriate elements of that world' (ibid., p. 46).

⁴⁰ Turning the debates about the gaming experience on its head, Alexander Galloway, in his study of realism in documentary games, places the gamer's experience in relation to his or her surrounding reality. Noting that the interactivity of games heralds a 'third phase of realism', the first two being narrative realism of literature and the second in painting, the fact that games require gamers to perform actions, necessitates a taking into account of the social reality that the gamer inhabits. Galloway argues that realism in games is in fact dependent on the gamer's social reality and context: 'But for games to be realist, they cannot be excised from the material realities in which they are played. To put it bluntly, a typical American youth playing Special Force is most likely not experiencing realism, where as realism is indeed possible for a young Palestinian gamer playing Special Force in the occupied territories. This fidelity of context is key for realism in gaming.' (2004) Galloway's point is fascinating but not within the scope of this article.

Bogost argues that 'verbal, written and visual rhetorics inadequately account for the unique properties of procedural expression' (ibid., p.29) making this a primary expressive feature of videogames. However, bearing in mind documentary theory in relation to docu-games, it makes little sense to exclude the audiovisual or narrative aspects of videogames as important sources of meaning, it is rather in the combination between these sources of meaning that videogames may make statements about reality. Indeed, many docu-games derive their meaning from the coupling of programmed behaviour with specific representations and narrative contextualisation. Whereas the programmed behaviour of falling blocks may impregnate a certain potential for meaning, it is the visual representation of the blocks as bombs falling over a contemporary Afghan landscape that turns it into a particular statement. Bogost has more recently been criticised for his overly author-centred (or, in this case, designer-centred) perspective on meaning in videogames. Miguel Sicart rightly argues that procedural rhetorics ascribe too much meaning to the designed aspects of the videogames instead of the dynamic aspects of playing the game (Sicart, 2011). In this way, procedural rhetoric can be seen as a game studies pendant to auteur theory in films studies focusing on the text as a product of the designer's personality and motives of persuasion⁴¹.

Cynthia Poremba also criticises Bogost for overemphasising procedural rhetorics and the predetermination and proscription of programmed rules, at the expense of the experiences of the gamer. The stated aim of Poremba's thesis is to explore '... how gamemakers might craft a stronger understanding of actuality in these works' and in this she has a two-pronged approach. Firstly, and as already explored, gamemakers 'must first find ways of 'reclaiming indexicality within a digital medium', and secondly 'understand how games work as expressive, meaning-making frames' that are interpretations and statements as much as they are outlines for programmed entities and prescriptive process (2011, p. ix). In contrast to Bogost, she focuses on games' expressive characteristics as these 'expressive, meaning making frames' involving both game design and gameplay and thus includes both game designer and the gamers in the interpretation and meaning making processes⁴².

⁴¹And just like auteur theory, this perspective has its benefits and its shortcomings revealing, on the one hand, important aspects of the text's form and origins, but ignoring, on the other hand, the production process as a predominantly collective endeavour and the reception context as a crucial aspect of the meaning making process.

⁴² Poremba finally argues that it is the combination between the 'reclaimed indexicality' and the expressive framework that allows the gamer to partake in 'performative enquiries' into events and situations that ultimately should be described as 'true or non-true' rather than 'real or unreal'. (2011, p. 77)

In the following section we will discuss more thoroughly how the coupling between audiovisual representation, narrative contextualisation and procedural rhetorics may support documentary 'voice' and genres and their epistemic relationship as proposed by Plantinga and Bondebjerg.

Epistemic positions in documentary theory

As discussed in the previous sections and as supported by many of the scholars cited above, it is not our opinion that the relationship between docu-games and the reality they describe should be seen as more artificial or fragile than in other media or genres. On the contrary, what is interesting with regard to games and their description of reality is that they represent new ways of conveying meaning and reality.

In this regard and as mentioned previously, Bondebjerg distinguishes between four documentary genres with four different ways of relating to the reality they describe: the authoritative, observational, dramatised and poetic-reflexive documentary. With these distinctions follows a set of genre characteristics regarding the purpose, structure and aesthetics of these types of films and importantly, in this context, the different kinds of reference to reality embedded in these documentary genres. With these four genres proposed by Bondebjerg come four different ways of relating to reality: epistemic authority, epistemic openness, epistemic hypothetical and epistemic-aesthetic. Epistemic authority and epistemic openness have in common a strong anchorage in the presentation of facts. However, they differ with regard to their way of dealing with the facts. The authoritative documentary sets forth an assertive argument about the world whereas the observational documentary sets out to show a piece of lived reality for the audience to interpret⁴³. In contrast, the dramatised and poetic-reflexive are less anchored in the presentation of facts. The dramatised documentary takes various forms, it can be the dramatisation of a real event or a fictitious event presented in a documentary form, for example, in a contra-factual 'what if' documentary. In both cases this is a hypothetical statement exploring how things might be, or have been, or how people in communities might react should a certain situation arise. The focus of poetic-reflexive documentary is often on the representation of reality in itself and thus this documentary genre often takes a highly aestheticised form, drawing attention to its medium, the production process and the very act of representing reality (Bondebjerg, 2008, forthcoming 2013).

⁴³ Obviously, this genre also involves a considerable amount of organisation, selection and direction from the production team and the 'authenticity' of the observational form is also a construction, as explored by proponents of, for example, cinema vérité and Direct Cinema.

In the following section we will analyse a number of case-studies in order to explore how the interplay between audiovisual representation, narrative contextualisation and procedural rhetorics may establish different – but equally valid and credible – types of references to reality, and discuss how these correspond to the positions described above.

***Gaza/Sderot* and *Model Agency* – Interactive database documentaries as epistemic openness**

As described in the previous sections, games differ from traditional types of narratives in being non-linear and by allowing for player actions and interactions. However, having said this, non-linearity and player/viewer interaction are precisely what characterise other new forms of documentary. Online database documentaries allow the viewers to interact with sections of footage directly and decide their own narrative journey through this material based on, for example, following a specific character, viewing the events from a specific time or place, or simply being a *flaneur* moving through various clips. As such, they too can be described as docu-games. For example *Gaza/Sderot* (Arte, 2009, France) explores the lives of a number of villagers in two neighbouring villages on opposite side of the Israeli-Palestinian border. Here, villagers are confined to their own territory, but the viewer can cross the border and explore the similarities of the lived realities and common human reactions on both sides of the border. *The Model Agency* (Channel 4, 2009, UK) follows life and work at one of the UK's busiest model agencies. Here, the user can watch pre-made documentaries, which were also televised, or explore individual characters, situations and events more deeply by accessing and navigating all the footage from the series online. As is the case with these examples, database documentaries often take the form of observational documentaries and, as such, their reference to reality or epistemic credibility precisely rests with the ability of the viewers to watch and access the material in an as unobstructed, unedited and unmediated way as possible. The Direct Cinema school of observational documentary in particular argues that a film's reference to reality depends on its footage being presented as unedited and observational. Following this line of argument, the procedural rhetorics of the database enable the viewers/gamers to decide their narrative path and access all the raw and unedited film footage. This creates an openness that does not undermine the credibility of the material, but, on the contrary, make its reference to reality stronger by allowing an extended and expanded epistemic openness.

But how about productions that involve the more direct gameplay features that we recognise from videogames? How do they work as statements about reality and what sort of epistemic positions do they point towards?

Kuma Wars and Global Conflicts: two takes on present-day Afghanistan

KUMA Wars: Afghan Air Strikes and *Global Conflicts: Afghanistan* both deal with the issue of conflict in present-day Afghanistan and both have a more or less declared ambition of making the player familiar with a variety of 'facts' about this conflict. However, they do so from very different angles involving different narrative contexts, audiovisual scenarios and gameplay objectives. *Global Conflicts* is an educational game series dealing with conflict all over the world. It is deliberately designed for classroom teaching and offers different kinds of teaching resources, such as teacher manuals and student assignments on its website. This specific episode is set in a small Afghan village where the school is attacked and the player has to figure out how and why this has taken place by talking to the locals. In comparison, *KUMA Wars* primarily deals with combat, recreating real life combat situations through a series of 'missions' or episodes based on historical events. Depending on the availability of material, each mission comes with an array of supplementary 'documentary' sources such as satellite imagery and news coverage. This specific mission is called *Afghan Air Strikes* and involves an encounter between the Afghan national army and Taliban warriors, introducing the possibility of ordering air strikes as a new and interesting gameplay feature. As indicated by this description, the two cases are situated within very different moral frameworks emphasising, in the first case, citizenship, democracy and intercultural understanding and, in the second case, armed conflict and military operations. The aim of this analysis is not to evaluate these frameworks normatively, but to describe how they are reflected in the audiovisual representation, narrative contextualisation and procedural rhetoric of the two games and how different types of reality claims are established on this basis.

First of all, both games establish a certain 'contract' with their audience by way of the specific context. As mentioned previously, *Global Conflicts* presents itself as a learning resource stating that the episodes are 'developed with close attention to curriculum requirements and ease of use in classroom teaching' (www.globalconflicts.eu). Furthermore, this specific episode claims to represent as neutrally as possible various perspectives on the triggering event, stating that it 'does not attempt to show what's right or wrong, but instead focuses on presenting the various perspectives that are present in the country' (www.globalconflicts.eu/products). In this way, the game invokes the authority, objectivity and neutrality that are usually associated with classroom texts. Thus, *Global Conflict* places itself among a group of educational or 'persuasive' games that also have the stated purpose of informing students/players about contemporary political and global issues. On the other hand, *Kuma Wars* presents itself as 'a free, high-end series of playable

recreations of real events in modern combat' (www.kumwars.com) emphasising the accuracy of its portrayal of real events as an important feature of the quality of the gameplay. This is further underlined in the presentation of this episode in which information is split between 'game info' and 'real world event'. Game info includes production notes, tips and tricks, screen shots, game maps and level objectives, while information regarding the real world event includes mission details, chronology, satellite imagery, multimedia, news coverage and global headlines, as well as an introduction to tactics, forces and weapons. In this way, the game is based on the assumed integration between certain aspects of the real world event and the game design. In this way *Kuma Wars* belongs to a group of games that combine a well-known gameplay genre with real historical events and settings, pointing towards another type of referentiality.

The audiovisual representation in both games displays a rather stereotypical vision of a stony and sandy landscape with low buildings and sparse vegetation, locating the conflict in underdeveloped rural areas of Afghanistan. However, in *Global Conflicts* this landscape is inhabited by civilians, including children, going about their everyday routines among the stony walls, whereas *Kuma Wars* depicts a rather deserted area with empty buildings and seemingly idle civilians running away as the player approaches. Of course, both games suffer from the monotonous movement patterns and lack of detail typical for low-budget 3D productions, but the differences are nonetheless significant. Regarding narrative contextualisation, the two games take very different perspectives on the conflict. As mentioned previously, videogame narratives have little of the intricate plotting and careful distribution of plot-information associated with novels and fiction films. Rather, the game narrative should be seen as a way of contextualising player actions by endowing them with particular meaning and implications in the game world. In this light, narrative contextualisation has to do with the way the game is 'staged' by way of roles, types of action and the overall conflict in the game. In *Global Conflicts*, for instance, the player takes the role of a character called Michael who travels to Afghanistan to help his friend Alan who is seemingly in trouble after establishing a school in a little village. The characters he meets along the way include an Afghani civilian, a mullah, a police officer, a Taliban warrior and an ISAF soldier. The main conflict has to do with the hostility towards the school as it is articulated differently by the different characters. In stark contrast to this, *Kuma Wars: Afghan Air Strike* mainly approaches the conflict as a military operation. The player controls a squad of four soldiers from the Afghan Army engaging in armed conflict with Taliban warriors who have just ambushed a vehicle and fled into the mountains. The player has to navigate the characters through a rather hostile landscape and kill the insurgents before they kill him, but the deeper reasons for the conflict are not questioned or discussed in any way.

However, as argued above, the audiovisual representation and narrative contextualisation cannot be seen

independently of the overall procedural rhetorics of the game, that is, the way they are integrated into a programmed system with particular behaviours and chains of causation that do in themselves serve as statements about the reality in question. In the *Global Conflicts* episode, for instance, the main action available to the player is to engage in dialogue with the people involved in the conflict. More specifically, this involves choosing different directions in the dialogue, as it is not possible to make up new questions or answers⁴⁴. However, even within this rather simple construction, behaviours and casual relations are significant. For instance, in the ongoing exchange of statements the player has to balance between politeness and insistence in order to get the necessary information. In this way the design of the dialogue itself makes a point regarding the possible solutions to the conflict in the game: it is a continual balancing act of several conflicting considerations. This is further emphasised in the final part of the game, in which the player has to combine the different statements that have been collected into a set of arguments regarding the future of the school. These involve security, education and cultural understanding and obviously call for very different solutions. The most important exception to this is the part of the game in which the player is taken hostage by Taliban warriors and interrogated. At this point all attempts at negotiation lead to the player's death implying that in such a situation the player can do nothing but comply. In this way, the procedural rhetoric of *Global Conflicts* concerns the challenge of communication and the pay-off between conflicting considerations in this war-torn area of the world.

While player actions in *Global Conflicts* are reduced to choosing a path through a predefined dialogue-structure, player actions in *Kuma Wars* are reduced to navigating the terrain and shooting. Civilians run and members of the Taliban shoot when approached, giving the player no choice but to flee or shoot back, making other types of interaction with non-player characters impossible. Instead, the range of possibilities made available to the player is limited to how to cross the terrain, how to alternate between the four characters at hand and which weapons to use. With regard to the latter, an important consideration concerns when to call for an air strike, which can only be done a limited number of times, but which is rather effective when carried out. In this way, the 'procedural rhetorics' of *Kuma Wars* concern the skills of the soldier and strategic considerations relating specifically to the implementation of military operations – alternative ways of dealing with the conflict are not integrated into the gameplay.

On the basis of this description, how do the two games refer to reality? As mentioned previously, *Global Conflicts* presents itself as a teaching resource that makes the player aware of different perspectives on the conflict while

⁴⁴ The game also involves two minigames which involve slightly more interaction with the visual interface, but these minigames have little significance to the outcome of the game.

avoiding taking a stance on its rights or wrongs. In practice, this is mainly implemented by way of a dialogue structure, where the player exchanges statements with particular characters representing parts in the conflict. Accordingly, evaluating the credibility of this game as a documentary entails evaluating whether the chosen perspectives are indeed relevant to the conflict and whether they are truthfully and neutrally described. Due to the dialogue structure, for instance, all perspectives – civilians, mullahs and members of the Taliban – are presented as equally significant, which is not necessarily the case, just as the focus on different cultural perspectives rules out alternative explanatory models such as territorial issues or international power struggles. In contrast, *Kuma Wars* presents itself as ‘recreations of real events in modern combat’ (www.kumawars.com) emphasising instead the congruity between the real event and the specific game episode: is the game map comparable to the satellite imagery presented on the website, and does the gameplay involve those weapons and vehicles described as part of the real world event? With regard to this issue, the episode in question has certain shortcomings. The availability of health packs, for instance, represents a typical First Person Shooter (FPS) feature that bears little relation to reality, and, similarly, the player’s ability to carry three large weapons around in an inventory lacks credibility. Furthermore, the Taliban warriors turn out to be in possession of a sniper rifle that is not described in the ‘real world event’⁴⁵. In this way, the contract and self-proclaimed documentary status established on the website are not met by the actual game design. This is probably due to the wider goals of the two games. While *Kuma Wars* represents itself as an opportunity to ‘play the news,’ the wider context of the website also offers pure entertainment games such as *Dinohunters* suggesting that entertainment, rather than real life, is the main focus. That is, the news element is perhaps just a pretext for the gameplay rather than the gameplay being a tool for presenting the news. In comparison, *Global Conflicts* is first and foremost a teaching resource and would work poorly as a game in its own right.

Documentary at Play

As mentioned in the introductory sections, much writing on docu-games has asked *whether* games can be documentary texts at all and questioned whether they – *qua* games – can establish references to reality. We have argued that this implies a reductive and media-centric understanding that makes little sense in the broader context of documentary theory. Instead, we have tried to ask in *what ways* games can make references to reality, focusing on cases of docu-games belonging to very different documentary subgenres. By way of the context, database documentaries function like observational documentaries with a corresponding open epistemic

⁴⁵ This may be due to a flaw in the description of the real world event rather than the game since the members of the Taliban could indeed be in possession of a sniper rifle. However, it breaks the congruity between the game episode and the documents about the real world event that constitute the truth claim of the game.

reference to reality. Conversely, the final two games analysed above *Global Conflicts* and *Kuma Wars* establish very different documentary contracts, focusing respectively on a balanced and fair representation of perspectives, and the accuracy of simulation respectively. As shown in the analysis, these games enforce new stylistic and aesthetic ways of establishing 'voice' in Plantinga's terms, including procedural rhetorics as a game-characteristic feature.

But how do these two games relate to the documentary genres and epistemic positions introduced above? Seen in relation to Bondebjerg's categories, both games and, indeed, videogames in general, might at a first glance be defined as epistemic-hypothetical as they deal with simulations of actions and processes rather than presentation of facts. However, this would once again put too much focus on general characteristics of the medium and less on particular meaning-making processes. In the context of docu-games, it is worth exploring both 'facts' and 'voice' further and in more detail. Games can indeed be designed and programmed in correspondence with a chosen set of facts and they can in this way be seen as presenting facts in the same manner as the authoritative and observational documentary. If *Kuma Wars* had actually kept its own promise and built up its simulation in correspondence with its analysis of the real world event, it could indeed have been seen as presenting facts. Furthermore, 'voice', as argued above, is a combination of aesthetic and stylistic choices including gameplay and cannot be reduced to one single aspect of a medium such as the programmed and simulated nature of videogames. Looking at the two games in question, they do, at least in their stated purpose, share important characteristics with other epistemic positions such as the epistemic authority that Bondebjerg associates with the authoritative documentary genre.

The procedural rhetorics of *Global Conflicts* guide the player to specific learning outcomes and underline the importance of neutrality and b perspectives. In doing so, a clear selection and simplification has taken place; certain perspectives, such as the religious (the Mullah), the civic and cultural (the civilian) and the military (the Taliban and the ISAF soldier), are negotiated and are considered crucial to an understanding of the conflict whereas other perspectives, such as gendered, generational and ethnic, are excluded. In this way the game selects and simplifies for the sake of its educational purpose while still seeking a representative version of events. The combination of the contract established in the game context and the particular design and stylistic choices involving a rather predetermined course of action in the gameplay puts forth an assertive argument about the world characteristic of the authoritative documentary. In this way *Global Conflicts* shares characteristics with the epistemic hypothetical as well as the epistemic authoritative position. As stated in the analysis, *Kuma Wars* does not really meet its own criteria of a credible or truthful representation of reality as the

game design does not reflect those aspects of the real world events that are put forth and for this reason it is difficult to define its possible affiliation with any of Bondebjerg's epistemic positions.

To conclude, the ways in which games can make references to reality cannot be explored through innate characteristics of the medium of videogames in isolation nor by documentary theory alone. Rather, understanding how docu-games make references to reality in ways that can be described as documentary must be seen as a combination of the contractual relationship established by the context, as well as the aesthetic and stylistic means employed. In this regard videogames do not differ from other media. However, their programmed characteristics or procedural rhetorics represent a new source of (documentary) meaning and need to be taken into account.

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Part 3 – Concluding remarks

Conclusion and research perspectives

The four articles that make up this thesis explore four different aspects of documentary film and content, and the industry that finances, produces and distributes these productions within the rapidly developing multiplatform context in the UK, during the period of 2006 to 2011. Each article reaches its own conclusion. This conclusion will outline some overall tendencies and perspectives relating to documentary in a multiplatform context that have emerged across the four articles and place the conclusion of each article within this wider context.

Continuity and change in the multiplatform mediascape

Central to this thesis is the well-documented proposition that digital technology and the tools afforded by Web 2.0 have greatly increased the potential for interactivity and given rise to new ways of funding, producing and distributing audiovisual media (Benkler, 2006; Bennett & Strange, 2011; Bruns, 2005, 2007; Caldwell, 2003; J. Gray, 2010; Jenkins, 2006). This presents opportunities, challenges, possibilities and problems for documentary and factual content. The critical traditions that have informed the articles in this thesis – research into digitisation and Web 2.0 at large, production studies as well as documentary studies – are expansive and buoyant fields of scholarship. However, so far there has been little research focussing on documentary films in the multiplatform context, and even less specifically on British documentary film and production⁴⁶ within this new environment. This thesis seeks to remedy this.

To return to the analogy of the gold rushes in the 1800s America: while every prospector hopes to strike gold, it is usually the ones who sell the shovels or take equipment and workers to the frontier that make the real fortunes. Web 2.0 heralded a new area when the internet took advantage of its inherent audiovisual properties and became more personal and personalised through increased interactivity and the development of social networks. This has impacted on the provision and production of audiovisual content, and with that documentary content. Since 2006 when the distribution and viewing of audiovisual content online became an established everyday practice, the multiplatform audiovisual mediascape – and with that the documentary industry and documentary content – have taken on a multiplicity of new forms. In physical and economic terms, some start-ups, like Facebook and YouTube, have boomed spectacularly. Others, like Bebo and My Space, have boomed and then gone bust or faded away. Still others, like Amazon, have boomed, almost gone bust, and then boomed

⁴⁶ Notable exceptions are Danny Birchall, Ana Vicente, Alex Juhasz, and Graeme Turner, and in a UK context James Bennett and Niki Strange.

again. New services and platforms that have been invented and introduced during this time, such as Twitter, the iPad and YouView, have had a huge impact on the way content and media is consumed, produced and provided.

In the gold rush, mythmaking, rumours and dreams of what might be informed many prospectors' decisions to head for the gold fields as much as hard facts did. This is also the case today. Ways or systems that attempt to think about, conceptualise and contextualise this evolving but uncertain mediascape have determined the business plans and strategies of numerous media companies, institutions and organisations at every level. Their ensuing trajectories change and evolve as new concepts, new knowledge, new opportunities and new technologies emerge. For this reason, some of the media's development decisions being made now or in the recent past are responses to immediate changes, or strategies designed to anticipate future events and markets. Some are based on events that have already taken place, whilst others are reactions to theories, concepts, ideas and projections about what might be happening now or in the future. Some of these will materialise, whilst others will prove to be mirages. But one thing is clear: all players in the mediascape, whether they are new entrants or established organisations, know that the market is witnessing an unprecedented level of technological, economic and cultural ferment and they are reacting, responding and repositioning themselves to adapt to threats and to try to take advantage of perceived opportunities.

By way of illustration, before 2006, one of the big ideas within the established media was to own, or have the right to distribute a critical mass of copyrighted content. During this period the TV networks expanded rapidly online in a massive media land grab without having first developed an integrated multiplatform strategy, as BBC Online/bbc.co.uk and channel4.com are examples of. At this time, Amazon was essentially still seen by its competitors as an online bookshop, but Amazon was already expanding into most other goods, launching one of the earliest DVD and games postal rental services in the UK, and eventually merging with the Guardian's Lovefilm.com to become one of Europe's first and largest DVD, games and on-demand audiovisual service providers⁴⁷. Then, between 2006 and 2007 the dominant thinking changed and content aggregation was replaced by content curation. Google bought up YouTube and the TV networks' launched VOD services. At the time, few organisations had yet worked out how to monetise this content, and at industry and academic conferences, speakers regularly made the point that while everyone knew that the internet was changing everyone's business model, even Google had yet make money from YouTube. This point has not been repeated recently.

⁴⁷ Amazon took over its main competitor Lovefilms in 2012.

Then, as it became possible to stream longer clips of audiovisual content online and programmes and films became readily available on YouTube, Vimeo and VOD sites, the race was on to become the providers of sufficient bandwidth to accommodate for this. Amazon, Apple and Microsoft joined Google and BT (British Telecom) in the server space and cloud storage market. This took on a new level of importance with the introduction and popular uptake of the iPad, tablet computers, smart mobile phones and other portable audiovisual media devices and platforms. Consequently, Google and Microsoft squared up to Apple in the fight to control the mobile phone market so that they, too, could be the 'shop fronts' that sold the audiovisual content, as well as the railroads that delivered it. Today, the trend is for the corporations to want to become a global player that can provide most, if not all, of these services. Consequently telecom providers are teaming up with TV networks to provide a fully integrated service that comprises bandwidth, curation and content backed up by an established broadcast network's brand recognition. In the US Hulu is a good example of this type of service, while in the UK telecom providers BT and TalkTalk have teamed up with the British terrestrial broadcasters (BBC, Five, ITV and Channel 4) to form the pioneering service YouView.

How this particular gold rush ends – or indeed whether it will ever end – and who will eventually command the most power and make the most profit from this changing mediascape is impossible to predict. Indeed in this climate one makes predictions at one's own peril. Fifteen years ago Jeff Bezo's dot-com friends used to joke that his start-up ought to be called amazon.org rather than amazon.com because it was likely to be so unprofitable and inconsequential, but today they are probably not laughing quite so loudly (A. Smith, 2001). Whatever happens next, this thesis has attempted to cast light on some specific areas where change has occurred at significant points in time, and to explore critically how this has impacted on the development of documentary content and the industry that surrounds it.

Within the documentary production ecology, users, producers, producers and programmers all react and respond to actual and perceived changes in a wide variety of ways. In responding to these changes, they also precipitate and shape the future development, processes and practices of documentary content production and delivery within a multiplatform context. The players in this new multiplatform documentary ecology are highly diverse. They include broadcasters, hobbyist producers, national film funding boards, video ambushers, NGOs, advertising agencies, boutique production companies, superindies, established distributors, Hollywood studios, crowdfunders, guerrilla filmmakers, gamers and gamer designers – and they have a multitude of agendas, interests and motivations. Some use new tools and new technology to create and contribute something entirely new that challenges established documentary forms and practices. Others seek to harness and use these new developments to maintain their position and influence in the mediascape and to try to re-establish the status quo.

Many organisations are at once both innovative and jealously possessive and protective of their existing brands and reputations.

In relation to documentary content in a multiplatform context, digitisation and the take-up of Web 2.0 tools and technology have influenced the development of documentary in two main respects. Firstly, and on the level of individual documentary productions, they have facilitated the emergence of a plethora of new multiplatform documentary forms and expressions. Common to these new forms are heightened levels of interactivity that enable users to co-create and participate across platforms. Secondly, in terms of the documentary production ecology, digitisation and Web 2.0 tools and technology have ushered in new ways to produce, fund, and distribute documentary content. This has resulted in structural changes to the production sector as well as fostering collaborations across sectors, knowledge spheres and professional boundaries. Both the interactive and multiplatform documentary forms, as well as the new production, distribution and funding models, present new possibilities and potentially radical new kinds of interactions that could simply not have existed twenty years ago.

For example, all footage in *Life in a Day* (Macdonald, 2011, US) was crowdsourced, and in *RIP! A Remix Manifesto* (Gaylor, 2009, Canada) users uploaded their own content or remixed that of others online, and in so doing contributed to the content of the final feature documentary. These two documentaries are examples of what this thesis describes as intrinsically interactive, multiplatform documentaries. Other forms of extrinsically interactive, multiplatform documentaries films are funded and distributed online, as was the case with the crowdfunded and online distributed and licensed documentary *The Age of Stupid* (Armstrong, 2009, UK) or the Peer-to-Peer distributed documentary *Steal This Film II* (King, 2007, UK), that was also retrospectively funded through pay-if-you-want payments online. On an institutional level, VOD services on TV and online pose a fundamental challenge to the linear viewing patterns that have dominated TV until recently.

As platforms proliferate and become more mobile, media and audiovisual content increasingly pervade people's lives inside and outside their homes, throughout communities, and across national borders. In this all-pervasive mediascape, the interactions between professionals, producers, producers and users become increasingly connected and interwoven. Also, the relationship between documentary film and the economic and cultural contexts that surround it becomes increasingly complex and dynamic. These interactions and the potential for

interactivity across multiple platforms add extra dimensions to ‘traditional’ documentary films and contexts. As Dan Jones, Head of Interactive, at Maverick TV explains⁴⁸:

It’s interesting to look back on what a traditional one-off documentary is. It’s still much the same. But, it doesn’t exist in a vacuum as much as it might have done in the past. As soon as it becomes available there is an immediate community around it, whether it’s one you’ve actually created or just one that happens naturally on Twitter, people talking about it on Facebook or in comments on YouTube. (Interview with author)

What differentiates documentaries today, as Dan Jones elucidates, is that they integrate the notion and reality of their users; and have the potential to engage with, co-create with, and distribute through them. Documentary films today are inherently interactive, regardless of the forms they take, or the platform, or more often the mix of platforms, they appear on. Jones notes that even the most un-interactive, traditionally crafted 60 or 90 minute⁴⁹ documentary film no longer exists in a vacuum. It has a life around and beyond its transmission. It will be time-shifted on VOD, it may re-appear ripped on YouTube, be file-shared, or find itself the topic of tweets, blogs and conversations on social media. This wider lease of life is granted both by traditional media institutions (Channel 4 for example will show the film on 4oD and promote it on social media sites) and by non-institutional fans (or haters) who will engage in file sharing or promote aspects of the programme content peer-to-peer.

Therefore, when exploring documentary in a multiplatform context, as this thesis has set out to do, it is necessary to take into account the production and industrial context that surrounds documentary today; the ways in which users interact with it; the platforms on which documentary content appear, and the new forms this gives rise to. It follows that no level of the production ecology and no part of the relationship between producer, audience and texts can be seen in isolation. This is reflected in the methodological and theoretical approaches throughout the thesis and in the four articles that form its core.

Documentary genres and forms

While technological changes and new developments in production and distribution methods and tools have clearly affected industry practices, as well as offered significant opportunities to reinvigorate documentary in

⁴⁸ Independent production house Maverick TV is owned by the superindie All3Media. It produces on- and offline documentary and factual content for broadcasters, local governments and NGO across the world. Maverick TV also hosts and produces two of Channel 4’s verticals.

⁴⁹ 30’, 60’ or 90’ minute documentary refers to scheduled time. The actual length of each film of course varies depending on which channel the documentary is made for and its requirement for advertising minutes

terms of its forms, aesthetics and viewing patterns, they do not fundamentally change the definition of documentary film, its basic subgenres and how these should be understood. Although new documentary forms emerge, novel ways of combining different documentary genres surface, and documentary production methods are taken in new directions, the definition of documentary still stands. What is changing is the context for this genre and the new and hybrid forms this gives rise to – not how documentary is defined or the genre itself.

Throughout this thesis a distinction has been made between documentary 'genre' and documentary 'form'⁵⁰. Following Carl Plantinga (1997, 2005) and Ib Bondebjerg's (2008, forthcoming 2013) rhetorical and cognitive, contractual and contextual understanding, non-fiction film or documentary film is a definable genre. According to their definitions, documentary films deal with the depiction of reality and the status of the non-fiction or documentary film is established as a rhetorical (for Plantinga) or cognitive (for Bondebjerg) contract between filmmaker, film and audience. Bondebjerg further categorises documentary films as a genre that can be divided into four subgenres, each with its distinct epistemic reference to reality: the authoritative, the observational, the poetic-reflexive and the dramatised documentary. Bondebjerg's and Plantinga's analytical framework is central to this thesis' understanding of documentary film. It provides a useful and effective theoretical and analytic framework through which to explore and describe, on the one hand, what documentary films are, the communicative processes that take place, as well as how references to reality are established in these films and content, and, on the other hand, to understand the changes that are occurring in relation to documentary content in a multiplatform context. Accordingly, amidst the rapidly changing mediascape and shifting multiplatform context described in this thesis, the one constant is documentary film, as defined as a genre with four subgenres. Although new documentary contexts and forms emerge, what documentary and its subgenres are, have not changed.

Today, new documentary forms and expressions continue to emerge and proliferate. This has always been the case (Hight, 2009; P. Ward, 2005, p. 8). Throughout its history, documentary has taken on different forms, expressions and mutations, and especially when new technology, platforms or media are being introduced. For example, and as described in detail previously, documentary has undergone transformations and hybrid films

⁵⁰ Ways of defining documentary films vary (Corner, 2009, pp. 19-20) and not all scholars will agree with this definition, nor the ways in which the terms 'form' and 'genre' are employed here. Indeed, in documentary scholarship there is little consensus about whether documentary and its many permutations can and should be described as a 'form' or a 'genre.' To illustrate, Paul Ward describes documentary as a form (2005, p. 8), Ib Bondebjerg a genre and Carl Plantinga prefers the term 'poles' over 'genres' (1997, p. 10). Cynthia Poremba defines documentary games as genre (2011, p. iii & 1) and Danny Birchall calls for new online documentary genres (Birchall, 2009). However, this is not the topic of this thesis and the distinction between 'form' and 'genre' as described here, pertains to this thesis only. It has, however, proven a useful and necessary way of differentiating the subject of study – documentary – and the surrounding changes.

have emerged in response to changes to production technologies, the introduction of new platforms, as well as changing budgetary and scheduling constraints. Also, aesthetics have consistently been reinvented and the topics covered in documentary films widened with the introduction of for example portable sound, smaller cameras, digital editing software, digital tape and memory cards, and through influences from other art forms. While documentary form has always transformed itself and found new expressions, this process has intensified with digitisation and Web 2.0.

For example, in the same ways as YouTube videos borrow from documentary aesthetics and conventions, web and digital aesthetics now permeate into the look of documentary films. In Franny Armstrong's *The Age of Stupid* (2009, UK) the protagonist uses a touch screen to flick through an digital archive of past eco-disasters to create a montage of climate change anno 2008 and in *Catfish* (Joost & Schulman, 2010, US) pixelated footage and web interfaces illustrate and underline its topic: deception and fake identify online. In the same way as portable sound and lightweight cameras gave access to domestic situations in the 1970s and 1960s, microscopic cameras today provide access to hummingbirds' nests and the migration of birds as observed from their wings in BBC's *Earthflight* (BBC, 2012, UK).

In the light of these changes to documentary forms and contexts brought about by digitisation, some scholars and practitioners have called for widening or revisiting the definition of documentary films. For example, Danny Birchall alleges to identify four new documentary genres online (2009) and Craig Hight calls for either a refinement of 'documentary' as a term or its abandonment as a collective term in the light of digital developments across the documentary field (2009, p. 6). However, by basing itself on the documentary theories of Plantinga and Bondebjerg as this thesis does, there is no need to revisit the definition of documentary films. Following their theories, documentary films deal with reality and this relationship is constituted by the contract between filmmaker, film and audience. It is this contract, not the film itself that validates the status of the documentary film. A documentary film can be factually incorrect, fake, deal with hypothetical or future scenarios, or be a mockumentary, and still qualify as a documentary. A documentary film can take on a variety of forms, but the form alone cannot establish its status (Corner, 2009, p. 19; Plantinga, 1997, p. 16; P. Ward, 2005, p. 8), and neither can the producer, nor the user alone (Bondebjerg, forthcoming 2013; Plantinga, 1997). Similarly, although TV networks, commissioning and production structures and practices still play a dominant role in the production and distribution of documentaries in the UK, documentary content appears across platforms and can therefore not be defined by its platform or medium as James Bennett notes (2011). Moreover, Birchall's 'new genres' as well as other emerging hybrid forms can be fruitfully explained and well contained within the existing subgenres of the authoritative, the observational, the poetic-reflexive and the dramatised documentary.

Rather than revisiting definitions, there is a need for a conceptual framework to explain documentary films in an interactive and multiplatform context. This framework needs to encompass the individual film and the forms it may take, its production context and ecology, its uses and users, and the wider institutional and social-economic context that surrounds it.

Documentary content in context

It has been a key tenet throughout this thesis that documentary films in a multiplatform mediascape have to be understood within their cultural, social and industrial context. Thinking in contexts has permeated the analyses of this thesis on both micro and macro levels and is in line with its methodological and theoretical underpinnings. In terms of their levels of analysis of production and media environments, Lotz and Newcomb stress that although each level of analysis has a different emphasis and optics, none of the levels can be seen in isolation. It is the synergy between and complexity of these levels of analysis that ensures the usefulness of the analysis. Similarly, and in terms of the individual film, Carl Plantinga and Ib Bondebjerg's documentary theories stress that it is the rhetorical or cognitive contract between the filmmaker, the film and the audience, or to paraphrase, the producer/produser, the content and the produser/user, that establishes the film's status as a documentary. In placing the definition of a documentary film in this contractual relationship, Plantinga and Bondebjerg take into account the production conditions and decisions that had have been involved in the making of the film; the film's reception and the audiences' perceptions and understanding of it; as well as the film's structure, aesthetics and modes of expression. By integrating the social reality of the surrounding production, distribution and reception within the definition of the documentary film, their analytic framework also emphasises its context as contributing to the status and definition of documentary film (Bondebjerg, forthcoming 2013; Plantinga, 1997, pp. 16-19). Much as the dynamic and interconnectedness between the levels of the industrial level analysis are imperative to the understanding of the production context of the film, so are the dynamics and contractual relationship between the users, the film and filmmakers in relations to the film itself⁵¹.

In order to understand documentary in a multiplatform context, it is necessary to take into account the production and industrial context; as well as how users interact with this content. Therefore, it is useful to differentiate

⁵¹ It is of course both possible and fruitful, as it has been shown throughout the history of documentary scholarship, to focus on and explore specific aspects of individual films or series of films, and conduct analysis on the level of analysis of individual productions (Lotz & Newcomb, 2012, p. 75). In this thesis, however, context permeates every analysis and the centrality of this methodological, analytical and theoretical stance is reflected in its title.

between two types of documentary that combine these interrelated changes and that take account of the increasingly complex interactions between platforms, content, producers, producers and users as well as the production context in which they emerge:

1. Documentaries that are *intrinsically* multiplatform and interactive in their content and storyline, in that users can contribute to and engage with their content before or as the narrative unfolds. Collaborative documentaries, database documentaries, docu-games and remix documentaries fall within this category. The database documentary *Gaza-Sderot* (Gordey, 2008, Israel/Palestine), the docu-game *Global Conflict Afghanistan* (Serious Games Interactive, 2007, Denmark) the hybrid *Prison Valley* (Dufresne & Brault, 2009, France) and the Remix documentary *Life in a Day* (Macdonald, 2011, US) are examples of this.
2. Documentaries that are *extrinsically* multiplatform in that they are funded, distributed or promoted across platforms. This category includes documentaries that are commissioned as '360' commissions the content of which are changed by their producers as they migrate across platforms, as well as documentaries that are funded or distributed online, and viral videos produced for advertising, marketing, lobbying or astroturfing. Channel 4's online, interactive and on air documentary series *Battlefront I-IV* (Channel 4, 2007-, UK), the interactive documentary *Seven Days* (Channel 4, 2010, UK) and the crowd-funded and online distributed documentary *The Age of Stupid* (Armstrong, 2009, UK) are examples of this.

Some documentaries are both intrinsically and extrinsically multiplatform, but viewing documentaries from this dual perspective makes it clear that what is new about documentary in a multiplatform context is the new ways in which the producers and users interact with the production and distribution process across platforms.

Users, producers, producers

Much research has focussed on the blurring of demarcations between producer, broadcaster and user (Bruns, 2007; Caldwell, 2008; Jenkins, 2006), and the increasingly porous boundaries between production roles, as well as the merging of old and the emergence of new jobs within the industry (Bruhn Jensen, 2008; Caldwell, 2008, 2011; Chapman & Allison, 2009; Gaunt, 2009). However, it is equally true that the differences between 'professional' and 'amateur' production are still upheld by the traditional media institutions and their work practices, and that audiences often appreciate the difference (Ellis, 2010). Although ease of access to affordable

production technology and tools, as well as platforms to upload onto and distribute from, have lowered the entry barriers to all levels of production, few users are able to successfully translate this into a career in the media industry, or, indeed, even aspire to produce audiovisual content at a professional level. But produce in quantity they certainly do.

In recognition of this, Jean Burgess points out that the ongoing debates about copyright, file sharing and illegal downloads have hijacked the discourses surrounding user generated content. Instead of the commercial and industrial inflected focus on the end users and their consumption and production processes that currently dominates, she argues that there is a need for a more nuanced view of the actual uses of audiovisual material online (2011). Inspired by Burgess, this thesis sees the user and producer as operating on a continuum of activity, taking up varying positions between the role of amateur producer and professional producer. On this spectrum of activity, the user does not always occupy the same role but moves between several positions as their needs evolve and change. In much the same ways as Caldwell's industry worker performs different functions, sometimes acting as a producer, sometimes adopting the guise of a fan, and sometimes harvesting user generated content (2011), 'the people formerly known as the audiences', as Anthony Lilley called them (2006), engage in a spectrum of different interactions: They watch documentaries on the TV from their sofas and on their mobile phones on the bus. They also produce and upload family videos, remixes and Memes on Facebook to share with their friends and family. Some produce soaps about their own lives and even make money from them through advertising revenue sharing with Google/YouTube (as for example the Shaytard family did on YouTube). A minority set up new media companies in their bedrooms, register with PACT and pitch to broadcasters. The 'professional' producers do the same in reverse. Or, more to the point, both occupy various roles at different points in time. In the same way as they produce in a variety of forms, they also experience, access and consume documentary content in a variety of manifestations and contexts gradually making the dichotomy between 'push' and 'pull' media and content (Gripsud, 2010; Strange, 2011) increasingly hard to uphold. In order to capture the complexity of the different roles and functions that users perform and fulfil, each of the articles included in this thesis explores a different use of media at different stages of the production chain and on different levels of analysis (Lotz & Newcomb, 2012).

The industry: production companies and broadcasters

Within the documentary production industry, new technology has collapsed or made obsolete some production roles, but also created new job descriptions and production posts. It has lowered entry barriers into the industry, enabled new companies to emerge, and facilitated the vertical expansion of established TV companies into

related fields, for example post-production or web and new media production. It has increased the pace of consolidation within the industry with horizontal expansion and the formation of superindies. Budgetary changes and new forms of funding and distributing audiovisual content online have also influenced the ways in which audiovisual content, and with that documentary content, is produced, as described in the article *Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing. The Impact of Online Funding and Distribution on the Documentary Industry in the UK*.

Throughout this thesis and especially in its first three articles, one key point that has been frequently made is that although alternative viewing, production and distribution forms are emerging, for example P2P outlets, video sharing and social media portals and sites, traditional media and especially the established British TV broadcasters still dominate the UK market for audiovisual content, and by extension documentary films and content. Although these broadcasters' ability to act as cultural gatekeepers is under attack and they do not have the same oligopolistic stronghold on the market for audiovisual content as they previously did, they still have significant power over what is produced, commissioned and viewed in the UK. Moreover, and as this thesis has demonstrated, they actively seek to hold onto this power and their position as the world's leading providers of factual and documentary content by pursuing multiplatform strategies, as analysed specifically in the article *Channels as Content Curators. Multiplatform Strategies for Documentary and Factual Content in British Public Service Broadcasting*. Both the BBC and Channel 4 are developing and implementing strategies to facilitate their transition from public service broadcasters to public service media providers. These range from asserting their power as the one medium that can still reach the largest simultaneous audience, through aggressive expansion online using their brand recognition to attract viewers to their VOD services and websites, to adapting the techniques, forms and one-to-one communication models of social media to drive viewers to their content across platforms.

Today, the documentary production industry as well as broadcasters, factor in users and their uses of documentary content, both creatively and economically. Interactivity enables greater engagement with users and the possibility of creating more fulfilling, interactive and personalised experiences, be it through verticals or personalised VOD services, dual-screen programming, or through interactive documentary forms like co-created and crowdsourced documentaries or docu-games. At the same time, from a business perspective, interactivity allows the traditional media players to monetise, monitor and data mine these processes and user movement and content generation. It is important to note that it is still very much the creative production teams, platform owners and established media networks – or as it is the case in docu-games: the game designers – who to a large extent remain in control of the creative production process as well as shape and form how these interactions play out.

Commissioners in context

In terms of the documentary content produced in the UK, the BBC and Channel 4 still have a great influence over what types of films, programmes and content are produced and when. This is not true to the same extent in other national contexts where for example national films boards play significantly greater roles in the commissioning, production and distribution of documentary films, as it is the case for example in Denmark and Canada. However the mechanism remains the same: funders and their decisions, policies and agendas have a significant influence over the type of content produced at any given time⁵². In the UK where the TV stations and their commissioners have significant power over what type of content is funded, commissioned and produced, so too do they play a significant part in naming and defining forms and sub-genres.

Commissioning decisions are based on numerous factors: policy remits for broadcasters, individual channel and programming strategies, scheduling requirements (although with non-linear television and VOD this becomes less significant), available budgets, advertising potential and perceived audience requirements based on programme reviews, viewing figures, focus groups, audience appreciation indexes and trends on Twitter and Facebook. It is the broadcasters' decisions about what type of documentary content their particular channels and schedules needs, that the commissioning editors of the TV network's documentary and factual departments then put out to tender to the in-house teams and the independent production companies who seek to produce and provide the factual programmes and content. The in-house production teams and TV production companies then submit proposals to commissioning editors that they believe will fulfil the channel's stated needs. If these proposals are successful, producers are then funded to make programmes in accordance with the original commissioning briefs, production requirements and editorial input of the commissioning editors. If producers fail to do this they would not secure TV commissions and consequently have no cashflow and no company or otherwise lose their jobs. The programmes that are successfully produced under this system are then broadcast, described as 'factual,' 'reality' or 'documentary' in TV listings, and these marketing definitions trickle down to become the terms used by critics and viewers and subsequently inform the wider understanding of documentary. To provide an example of this, in the late 1990s and early 2000s the documentary departments of both Channel 4 and the BBC were replaced by 'popular factual' and 'specialist factual departments'. 'Popular factual departments' were given the remit to commission the formatted documentary that have become known as 'reality TV' and its various spin offs, while the 'specialist factual departments' were given the remit to commission more traditional history or science documentaries. Today, the popular factual departments have largely ceased to exist

⁵² There is no doubt that some content and film will always be produced regardless of funding, for example student productions, issue led documentaries and certain art documentaries. However, the main point here is that in an industrial context the overall funding decision to a very large extent decides what programmes and documentary films and content are produced

in the UK due to the perceived decline in the popularity of reality TV and formatted documentaries. Commissions for these forms of documentary are now catered for by the old documentary departments, that now are back, along with crossplatform or multiplatform commissioning teams. This structural change is likely to impact on the types and forms of content we will see in future and also on how we as a society, as well as critics and audiences, talk about, understand and view documentary content. It is in this context that Stuart Cosgrove, Channel 4's Head of Creative Diversity, can talk about widening the definition of documentary film to 'documentary content' in opposition to what he calls 'longitudinal documentaries.' Also it is worth noting that because both Channel 4 and the BBC have specific remits to provide both documentary and factual programmes, it is in their interest to provide wider and more inclusive definitions of what constitutes documentary and factual content. In this way, the industry can boast of a rise in factual and documentary output (Ofcom, 2010a), although in terms of actual spend, production budgets for documentaries have been reduced.

However much the definition of documentary is 'widened' in industry and popular parlance to suit policy, departmental and channel remits, this does not change how documentary as a genre is defined and should be understood. No matter how much documentary form and the discourses around it change, Bondebjerg's and Plantinga's definitions of documentary as a genre and its subgenres still provide a workable and meaningful framework within which to understand documentary films and content, and with it the ways that this genre mediates knowledge about the world.

Documentary in a multiplatform context

The ways in which digitisation and Web 2.0 impact on documentary film and the production industry that surrounds it in the UK is important to explore for a number of reasons. Firstly, to paraphrase Plantinga (1997), documentary film is a genre that mediates knowledge about the world and serves a democratic and enlightening function in society as a place and space where issues can be explored and debated. Secondly, British documentary has a prominent place in the world: it is well respected, award-winning and influences other documentary schools around the world. The films produced in the UK are widely viewed across the world. British documentaries are the second most exported globally, after their American counterparts (Stemmers, 2004). Thirdly, because the British public service broadcasters are required to commission such a high proportion of documentary films and factual programming, they take an industrial approach to the commissioning, production and distribution processes. This makes the UK documentary industry unique. If the multiplatform mediascape impacts on the conditions for documentary production, which this thesis argues that it does, then it is crucial to

record and understand how these changes affect the way documentary films are made, the new forms they take, the topics they explore and the people and organisations who produce and distribute them.

Returning to the rationale for this thesis, namely to explore what Plantinga describes as the function of non-fiction films albeit within a multiplatform perspective, this thesis has demonstrated that documentaries and documentary content flourish across platforms and still occupy a locus where the cultural, aesthetic and political values of a society are and can be debated. Irrespective of the forms that individual productions take and the platforms they are distributed on, documentary film is a genre that is anchored in reality and references actuality, although individual films have a different epistemic reference depending on their subgenre. Therefore this thesis argues that today documentary content in a multiplatform context should be seen in relation to the industry that surrounds it as well as the users, producers and producers who interact with it.

This is reflected across all the articles in this thesis. Accordingly documentary film has been explored in relation to its wider industrial ecology in the first three articles, Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing. The Impact of Online Funding and Distribution on the Documentary Film Industry in the UK; Channels as Content Curators. Multiplatform Strategies for Documentary and Factual Content in British Public Service Broadcasting; and Newsjacking the Media: Video Ambushing and AV Astroturfing. In the final article, Documentary at Play, the emphasis is on the dynamics between game designer, game and gamer, or production, product and player.

The article Channels as Content Curators. Multiplatform Strategies for Documentary and Factual Content in British Public Service Broadcasting, explored some of the ways in which the traditional media proprietors or broadcasters are repositioning themselves in this new mediascape in order to safeguard their positions as the leading providers of documentary and factual content. Pursuing this ambition affects and reshapes their traditional commissioning, funding and programming processes, strategies and priorities – and eventually their role in the mediascape and the content they commission. In a multiplatform environment, the documentary output of two publically owned PBS broadcasters, Channel 4 and BBC, is facing competition from new sides and sites. In the battle for audiences for documentary and factual content, they extend their brands online and also adopt the aesthetics, production and distribution practices of the sites and users in social networks. Both pursue multiplatform strategies of aggregating content around themes and portals – Channel 4's 'verticals' and BBC's 'bundled projects' or '360' commissioning – and both emulate activity on social networks online in order to tie users to content by orchestrating the user flows between platforms, online and offline, and their own and non-proprietary content. These practices are examples of 'second shift aesthetics' which John T. Caldwell theorises as a way of rationalising and orchestrating user flows around dispersed digital texts (2003), but they are also new

economic models. Both broadcasters are discovering the social, cultural and economic value paradigms of online activities, interactions and content generated on social networks and websites. As their channels evolve across platforms, the BBC and Channel 4 fulfil their public service remits to deliver high quality documentary and factual output as well as transforming themselves into public service media providers. They also take on competition from other providers of documentary content, find new ways of monetising non-proprietary content, and consolidate their positions as two of the world's leading gatekeepers of documentary content and film.

As entry barriers to all levels of the industry are lowered, it is not only individual users who begin to produce content. Organisations, political and religious groups also use video to further their issues and interests and force their agendas onto mainstream media. The article *Newsjacking the Media* describes how video ambushing and AV astroturfing have roots in established practices such as advertising, activist media and investigative documentary traditions, but have re-emerged on new platforms, and through this organisations have found additional ways of putting their points across. However, while access to production equipment and online platforms on which to place and stream viral video footage can be used by everyone, and while viral video can and does impact on news agendas, audiovisual content online has not created a markedly more democratic or level playing field. At this time of writing, it is still the traditional players, PR machines, broadcasters and news organisations that retain a proportionally far greater influence on what footage reaches mass audiences, when and in what ways. Amateur productions that make it big on YouTube, Vimeo or through Facebook are the exceptions that prove the rule. In the collision between new and old media, the existing hegemonies are being re-established not subverted.

The proliferation of platform and outlets for documentary content has also impacted on the economic models, funding and distribution methods of the industry as a whole. For example as the article *Channels as Content Curators. Multiplatform Strategies for Documentary Film and Factual Content in British Public Service Broadcasting* explores, an online presence opens up new revenue streams for Channel 4 which aggregates content around 'verticals' and then monetises its own and non-proprietary content through algorithmic advertising. Concurrent to this, and as demonstrated in the article *Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing*, developments in the documentary industry in the past decade have resulted in a polarisation of documentary budgets where 'low- to no-budget slots' are increasingly filled with sponsored content or are part-funded through product placement. At the same time the web has opened up alternative ways of funding and commercially distributing documentaries. P2P distribution and pay-if-you-want schemes allow producers and programme makers to fund films retrospectively, while crowdfunding and share option schemes facilitate upfront funding. Although these new funding forms and distribution schemes are gaining ground as ways of financing

documentary content away from the traditional funding bodies, the majority of documentary content produced in the UK – 79% – is still fully funded by established broadcasters, although this figure is slowly declining (PACT, 2009).

These changes in economic models impact not only on the ways documentary films are made, but also on what can be produced. Brand-sponsored content and product placement challenge and perhaps undermine the objectivity and balance that the public service broadcasted documentaries have been associated with. Without the upfront fee and backing from broadcasters' legal and compliance departments, documentaries that face significant legal challenges, have long-term production schedules or incur high costs (for example undercover investigations, long-form observation films, and dramatised documentaries) will be increasingly difficult to fund and produce. Therefore, as Nick Fraser, editor of the BBC's *Storyville* strand suggests in the article Channels as Content Curators, public service broadcasters in a multiplatform mediascape might well play a more central role and become more important, not less. As the landscape for documentary funding, distribution and production becomes increasingly crowded, the public service broadcasters with their journalistic standards, producers' guidelines, compliance and answerability to regulators become a useful port of call for users looking to find films whose veracity and objectivity have been tested. Thus while the traditional broadcasters and other established media players face increased competition from new funding and distribution methods, for now they have been able to successfully safeguard their position as the foremost providers of documentary and factual content in the UK. They have achieved this by using their brands and sub-brands; their expertise and experience in producing and delivering content; their infrastructure and technological know-how; as well as their scheduling and editorial prowess. At this point in time, the traditional media oligopolies are mirrored across platforms, and the gatekeeping positions of the old media players still stand.

The fourth article of this thesis, *Documentary at Play*, focuses on an emergent new documentary form, docu-games. Docu-games are an intrinsically interactive documentary form that enables the user or gamer to interact with the game and its narrative, and as such this form is too easily dismissed as 'just a game' or as only able to convey a subjective perspective. Indeed, much recent scholarship about docu-games sees precisely this – the ability of gamers to interact with the content on screen – as the reason why docu-games cannot reference reality. However, as the article *Documentary at Play* explores and argues, the reference to reality in docu-games is constituted by the tripartite of audiovisual representation, narrative contextualisation and 'procedural rhetorics' (Bogost, 2007), and the user can therefore not freely determine how the narrative unfolds but is guided to make certain predetermined choices. Exploring docu-games from the perspective of cognitive documentary theory, meaning and reference to reality in docu-games is constituted within the contract between gamer, the

audiovisual context of the game and the game designs. In line with this theoretical framework, the article offers perspectives on how this reference to reality is established, communicated and maintained within these emergent forms of docu-games, and seeks to make the point that these games mediate knowledge about reality while occupying different epistemic positions.

Digitisation has brought about changes to documentary and its industry, and in this process, documentary forms and expressions, as well as the ways in which these are interacted with across platforms, are being reinvented and renewed. Most players and participants – institutions, producers, professionals, users and audiences – take on increasingly complex roles in the multiplatform mediascape to respond and adapt to changing production practices and industry structures. In this process, new distribution and funding methods emerge, new players and production processes enter the industry, and novel ways of adding to and attributing cultural, aesthetic and economic value to content in the multiplatform mediascape are discovered. As a result, documentary film and the industry that surrounds it take on new expressions, forms and structures. However, what a documentary film *is*, remains the same.

Further perspectives and research

Writing this thesis in the article form has meant that I have been able to critically engage with current academic debates and research as the Ph.D. project unfolded. I have also been able to focus in detail on four, very diverse aspects of what is clearly a vast and expanding area of research. Like fragments of a hologram these articles hopefully go some way to illuminate the whole.

It has been exiting and profitable to engage actively in the publishing process, and the feedback and comments that have come out of the peer reviews and editing processes have proved valuable contributions to and sources of reflection for the articles presented here. For this I am very grateful. Writing articles truly sharpens one's points and pen. However, it necessarily does so at the expense of more detailed analysis, as well as the ability to develop an overarching theory as one would seek to achieve in a monograph. Similarly, writing an article Ph.D. entails the risk of both repeating points and displaying less coherence between articles than between chapters in a monograph.

The topics and focus of these articles arose as much out of my research interests as out of responses to specific Calls for Papers and Chapters. The particular orientation and focus of each article have therefore been informed by the particular focus and purpose of the journals and anthologies that these articles were written for. In the

introductory framing and choice of articles here, I have attempted to create as much coherence between articles as possible whilst avoiding repeating points. This has meant omitting other articles, papers and chapters that I have written and published during the course of this Ph.D. (Bondebjerg, Jensen, Sørensen, & Nielsen, 2009; Eriksson & Sørensen, 2010; Sørensen, 2010; Sørensen & Thorhauge, Forthcoming 2012), either because they did not fit the topic, overall argument or language of this particular thesis. Thus there are flaws that are inherent in the structure of the article Ph.D. format, but in an academic environment where the paradigm is to publish or to perish, the article Ph.D. also has its advantages in addition to those already mentioned.

It follows that there is plenty of scope to conduct further research into a number of areas and topics looked at and suggested by this thesis, in terms of further and more in-depth analysis, new case studies, theoretical reflections and expansions on the specific subjects of the articles here, as well as in the field of documentary in a multiplatform context at large.

In line with the overall approach of this thesis and its articles, research into the context in which documentary emerges in a multiplatform mediascape, and specifically dissections of their production process, and case studies of producers, funders and intended receivers would provide valuable contributions to the understanding of these news forms and contexts. For example, approaching identity and aesthetics within multiplatform documentary film and production from the perspectives of theories of the autobiographical documentary and intimisation of Michael Renov (2004, 2009) and Anne Jerslev (2004) would offer fascinating insights, that are not explored in this thesis. On an industry level, an historical account of how the UK broadcasters have incorporated the digital revolution into their business plans could shed light on the processes that led to the broadcasters' current decisions, strategies and structures. Similarly, studying the relationships and dynamics between the commissioners, producers and lobbyists would be fascinating, especially in the light of the recently published Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the British press following the News International phone hacking scandal that began in 2003.

Viewing the topics of this thesis in a global perspective would also be an interesting and expanding field for future research. The VOD market is already international as the successes of lovefilm.com, Cineflix, iTunes and Netflix attest. Some broadcasters, for example the BBC and DR (Danish Radio), now permit live streaming of their content across the world with their BBC global iPlayer App for iPads and the online DR NU (DR NOW), while others still restrict their services to their national territories. As national server restrictions are both enforced and eased, and increases in broadband and mobile bandwidth enhance the reach of VOD, the battle to deliver content is going global. The scope and scale of these new international VOD models across platforms would be

fields worthy of exploration. Also, as producers increasingly self-distribute, through for example the peer-to-peer, social media film distribution service Distrify or through the producer-led Film Collaborative, the effectiveness, penetration and uptake as well as the financial ramifications and models underpinning these business models would be fascinating to map.

In production studies, methodological and analytical tools with which to unpack production processes and environments, as well as theories around these methods, have been fruitfully explored from the direction of anthropology, ethnography, sociology and media studies (Born, 2005; Caldwell, 2006; Chapman & Allison, 2009; Gaunt, 2009; Mayer, et al., 2009; Ortner, 2009). However coupling these methods with data mining, and the methods and research tools from the disciplines of computing science and programming, could offer new and fertile avenues of research into the areas of how knowledge is mediated in an audiovisual way across platforms. Similarly, the intersection between practice, participation, observation and theory could fruitfully be addressed further. In particular in practice-based research, the relationship between the academics and practitioners and the extent and nature of academics' immersion in an industry or production environment in order to obtain sufficient and reliable knowledge could be theorised and operationalised methodologically further.

Explorations into the audiovisual mediation of knowledge in a multiplatform context in the widest sense hold out much promise. A mediascape permeated by audiovisual texts with ongoing changes in its media and technology (iPads and Twitter for example did not exist when this thesis was first embarked on), will continue to open up new possibilities in which one can make statements and assertions about fact and reality. Docu-games are just one example of an explosion of new hybrid forms that mediate knowledge and facts about the world, reality and actuality. Animated news channels, for example the Taiwanese Apple Daily; academic video, for example TED talks; interactive archival, learning resources that allow students to watch and remix their country's history, like scotlandonscreen.org.uk; CGI reconstructions of scientific processes; and simulations of crime scenes that are now allowed in US courtrooms – these are but a few examples of emergent ways of mediating knowledge in today's world. As these new forms develop, grow more established and become accepted ways of communicating facts and knowledge about reality, it is increasingly important to explore, analyse and understand the communication processes that enable and underlie these forms and their references to reality.

Abstract

This thesis explores documentary film and industry in the multiplatform mediascape in the UK, during the period 2006 to 2011. The thesis consists of four articles (one published, two forthcoming in 2012 and one in review), each one of which explores a different aspect of documentary film and industry within the multiplatform context.

The first part of the thesis outlines the main directions of thinking in these areas: firstly, documentary film; secondly, production studies especially with reference to documentary industry; and, thirdly, multiplatform broadcasting and audiovisual mediation. This section also charts the theoretical, historical and methodological framework that these articles place themselves within and that underpins the critical assumptions and foundation on which this thesis rests.

The first three articles in this thesis are industry level studies examining the dynamics between UK public service broadcasters and new documentary content and portals and sites across platforms and how these interrelate in a multiplatform context. The first article, Article 1. Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing. The Impact of Online Funding and Distribution on the Documentary Film Industry in the UK charts developments in documentary budgets and funding in the UK during the last decade and asks what new funding methods like peer-to-peer distribution, crowdfunding and share-based funding schemes mean for the documentary films, now and in the future, and how these are produced, funded and distributed. Article 2. Channels as Content Curators. Multiplatform strategies for documentary film and factual content in British public service broadcasting explores the multiplatform strategies that the two publically owned public service broadcasters in the UK, Channel 4 and BBC, employ in order to maintain their position as the leading providers of documentary and factual content in the UK. Article 3. Newsjacking the Media: Video Ambushing and AV Astroturfing examines what happens when viral videos online collide with the editorial practices and policies of traditional media outlets. Article 4. Documentary at Play explores the communicative function of new documentary form, docu-games. Based on cognitive documentary theory, this article ask in which ways these two new forms establish references to reality and mediate knowledge about the world.

The final, third part of the thesis summarise the overall observations about how documentary reference reality, place itself in relationship to its producers, users and produsers and how the documentary industry is reconfiguring itself in a multiplatform context. Finally, suggestions for and perspectives on further research in this area are offered.

Resumé

Denne afhandling omhandler dokumentarfilm og dokumentarindustrien i det tværmediale medielandskab i Storbritannien i perioden 2006 til 2011. Afhandlingen består af fire artikler (en udgivet, to antaget og en i fagfællebedømmelse), der hver udforsker et aspekt af dokumentarfilm og -industri i en tværmedial sammenhæng.

Den første del af afhandlingen skitserer de overordnede teoretiske retninger inden for, for det første, dokumentarteori, for det andet produktionsstudier, især med reference til dokumentarindustrien, og for det tredje tværmedial TV broadcasting samt audiovisuel formidling. Denne del skitserer endvidere de teoretiske, historiske og metodologiske felter, hvor artiklerne placerer sig, og som understøtter de teoretiske antagelser og fundamentet for denne afhandling.

Den anden del af afhandlingen består af fem artikler. De første tre artikler i denne afhandling fokuserer på dokumentarindustrien og undersøger hvordan dynamikken mellem britiske public service netværk og de nye dokumentarportaler og internetsider på tværs af platforme udspiller sig i en tværmedial sammenhæng. Artikel 1. 'Crowdsourcing and Outsourcing. The Impact of Online Funding and Distribution on the Documentary Film Industry in the UK' beskriver udviklingen indenfor budgetter og finansiering af dokumentarfilm i Storbritannien i de seneste ti år og undersøger hvad peer-to-peer, crowdfunding og aktiebaseret finansiering betyder for de dokumentarfilm, der vil blive skabt i fremtiden og måderne disse vil blive produceret og distribueret. Artikel 2. 'Channels as Content Curators. Multiplatform Strategies for Documentary Film and Factual Content in British Public Service Broadcasting' undersøger de tværmediale strategier, som de to offentligt ejede TV netværk, Channel 4 og BBC sætter i værk for at fastholde deres position som de førende leverandører af dokumentar- og faktaindhold i Storbritannien. Artikel 3. 'Newsjacking the Media: Video Ambushing and AV Astrourfing' analyserer, hvad der sker, når virale videoer på nettet kolliderer med arbejds- og redaktionsgangen i de traditionelle medier. Artikel 4. 'Documentary at Play' undersøger kommunikationsprocessen og meningsdannelsen i en ny dokumentarform: dokumentar spil. Med reference til kognitiv dokumentarteori spørger denne artikel, hvordan de nye former etablerer deres reference til virkeligheden og formidler viden om verden.

Den sidste, tredje del af denne afhandling opsummerer nogle overordnede observationer om, hvorledes dokumentarismen etablerer reference til virkeligheden, hvordan den placerer sig i forhold til sit publikum, producers og 'producers,' og hvordan dokumentarindustrien tilpasser sig det tværmediale medielandskab. Endelig, foreslås perspektiver på og forslag til yderligere forskning inden for dette område.

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